

BANDWAGON

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2003



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FRED D. PFENING, JR. EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editor

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THE FRONT COVER

This Sells Bros. Circus courier was used in 1884. It was printed by the Courier Company of Buffalo, New York. The original is in the Circus World Museum collection.

THE BACK COVER

This illustration was on the back cover of the 1904 Pawnee Bill Wild West courier. It is from the Pfening Archives

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CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A NEW TRUSTEE POSITION AND ELECTION OF ALAN CAMPBELL AS NEW TRUSTEE AND TO THE OFFICE OF SECRETARY-TREASURER

WHEREAS, Dave Price, Trustee and present Secretary-Treasurer of the Circus Historical Society, Inc. (CHS) will resign from the Office of CHS's Secretary-Treasurer effective with the close of business of CHS's present fiscal year on April 30, 2003 (while remaining a CHS Trustee); and,

WHEREAS Alan Campbell of Alpharetta, Georgia (an Atlanta suburb) has agreed to serve out the remainder of Dave Price's term as Secretary-Treasurer commencing on May 1, 2003 and expiring at the end of 2005; and,

WHEREAS, Section 5.01(4) of CHS's Code of Regulations (hereafter called "Code") requires that the office of CHS Treasurer be held by one who is also a Trustee of CHS; and,

WHEREAS, Alan Campbell has also agreed to become a Trustee serving CHS accordingly; and,

WHEREAS, there is not presently a vacant position on the CHS's Board

of Trustees so that it will be necessary to increase the number of Trustees by one in order to accomplish the aforesaid;

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Trustees of CHS as follows:

(1) Pursuant to Section 4.04 (a) of the Code ("Number of Trustees), the Trustees hereby increase the number of CHS Trustees by one so that hereafter there will be tenth (10th) Trustee position.

(2) Alan Campbell of Alpharetta (Atlanta), Georgia be, and he is hereby, elected to fill the newly created Trustee position, to serve until he or his successor is duly elected and qualified for a full eight-year Trustee term at the next quadrennial election of CHS Trustees in 2005, all as authorized and provided by Sections 4.04 and 4.05 of the Code, as amended.

(3) The said Alan Campbell be, and he is hereby, elected to the Office of CHS Secretary-Treasurer effective on May 1, 2003 to serve out the term of Dave Price who will hold that joint office until his resignation therefrom becomes effective at the end of April 30, 2003.

This the 24TH day of January 2003 ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES VIA ELECTRONICALLY TRANSMITTED WRITTEN CONSENT (per Code Sec. 6.02) AS OF OCTOBER 8, 2001 BY AFFIRMATIVE VOTES OF 9 OF THE 9 TRUSTEES (or more than the required 2/3 of the Trustees),

DAVE PRICE RETIRES AT 65

Dear friends:

I told the Board of Trustees several years ago that I wanted to bail out when I reached the magic age of sixty-five. That date is rapidly approaching (no gifts, please) and Mary Jane and I want to be able to do some traveling without having to worry about CHS mail stacking up at home.

I was first your secretary for two years back in the nineteen sixties, when the late Mel Miller nominated me for the post, and this time I have had the job for seven years, thanks to the arm-twisting of that guy in Columbus. During this time I have met many of you personally and probably most of you by mail, fax or

e-mail. Being CHS secretary has been a great experience for me and I'm sure you will be as nice to Alan Campbell as you have to me.

I plan to remain active in the organization as a trustee so I will continue to be in on the action for awhile yet.

Finally I want to thank the officers who have supported and encouraged me over the years, particularly presidents Dahlinger, Reynolds and Stencell and Editor Pfening. They have made the job much easier.

Hope to see you all in Peru, Dave

ALAN CAMPBELL NEW CHS TRUSTEE AND OFFICER ELECT

By resolution unanimously adopted by the Trustees on January 24th, CHS member Alan Campbell was elected as a Trustee to fill a newly created position on the CHS Board. He was also elected to serve as Secretary-Treasurer beginning with our new fiscal year on May 1, 2003.

Alan has been an enthusiastic CHS member, attending four of our recent conventions. He is native of California and graduated from its Pepperdine University in 1962. Alan enjoyed a long and distinguished

career as a pilot and flight instructor, first with the United States Air Force and then with Atlanta's Delta Air Lines. Since retiring from Delta in 2000 he has been active in safety and air traffic control work for the Air Line Pilots Association. He has expertise with computers and computer programming.

Alan resides in Alpharetta, Georgia (near Atlanta) with his wife Linda, a psychology professor at the University of Georgia. He has twice served as President of the Rivermont Community Association, a country club community of 908 homes.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Each time the *Bandwagon* is mailed a number of copies are returned by the post office because of address changes.

Many are returned marked temporarily away. If you are away the post office will not hold magazines or forward them.

The post office charges \$1.65 each time a magazine is returned. Please advise address changes in advance. Returned copies can not be replaced at no charge. Your cooperation will be most appreciated.

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1966-Jan.-Feb.
1967-Nov.-Dec.
1968-All but Jan.-Feb.
1969-July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.
1970-All but July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.
1971-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.
1972-All available.
1973-All but Nov.-Dec.
1974-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.
1975-All available.
1976-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec.
1977-All but Mar.-Ap.
1978-All available.
1979-All but Jan.-Feb.
1980-1986-All available.
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SIMULTANEOUS BIDDING ON **EA LIVE**

CANDY and the CIRCUS Go Hand-IN-Hand

By Robert J. Loeffler, Ph.D

Candy has been eaten since the earliest of times. Egyptians perfected a process whereby sweetmeats were made as early as 2000 B.C. In 1470, a Venetian candy maker learned to refine sugar obtained from the Far East. In America the colonists on the Atlantic Coast obtained sugar by tapping sugar maple trees with the help of the American Indian. The modern candy industry was born when sugar was used to make expensive confections, and today candy making is a multi-billion-dollar industry. Most people have a sweet tooth and have a yen for candy.

Dan Rice, clown, circus owner (1846-1886) and so much more trouped prior to, during, and after the Civil War. Patrons at that time, including children, were no different than those of today—everyone loved confections, one of which was candy. During the Rice era local grocers or itinerants were known as the taffy men and the sugar plum men because of the wares they plied in the vicinity of the white tops. These vendors carried an odd contraption for boiling and blending molasses, sugar, and early essences of flavorings for such sweet things.¹

The sugar plum man boiled "lump" sugar rather than molasses. This sugar had very coarse crystals about the size of a nail head and was similar to another later candy—rock sugar candy. One vendor inserted a crude stick into the melted mass and a type of sucker was the result.²

Another candy sold at the circus, but not made there, was a brown stick candy, which had a hard brittle outer layer that encased a soft coconut center. "To circus goers of generations past, it was what the ice cream cone is today."³ It was always sold inside the tent and was commonly called the "circus pole." An excellent name, don't you agree?

There was a refreshment tent in those days, which at first had a canvas roof with no sidewalls. There were counters on three sides, where all sorts of goodies were for sale. Peanuts were roasted and popcorn popped under the protection of the tent, so the candy man, the popcorn vendor and the peanut vendor worked side by side, and all the pennies and nickels added up to a tidy sum at the end of the day. Sometimes there was a candy stand just inside the entrance to the big show where one could buy the circus-own candy bag, stuffed with candy, peanuts or popcorn. The candy was not made on the circus grounds after about 1860 because, as Kunzog says, "Paradoxical as it may seem, with the simpler petroleum distillate stove to supercede the wood heat, candy-making...all but disappeared from the show grounds. The reason was not the new fuel, but the time and labor element. Candy-makers in



The midway candy stand on Ringling Bros. Circus in 1890. Butch Parson (4th from left) had the candy privilege on the show. Circus World Museum collection.

all fair-sized communities now had mechanical equipment and could offer the circus concessionist whatever candies needed at a lower price than he could produce them.⁴

Kunzog fails to give specific dates in his commentary on food items sold at the circus grounds and at the entrance to the performance, but leaves that important point to Stuart

The menagerie candy stand of Forepaugh-Sells Circus in 1897. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.



Thayer to ferret out the earliest recorded instance of a candy wagon with a circus. This occurred in 1841 when June, Titus, & Angevine drew up a privilege contract between the show and one Jacob Anthony.⁵ Thayer relates that: "When the shows went to tents and wagons in the nineteenth century, candy wagons were included in the train, either show-owned or run by 'privilege men' [such as Anthony]. By the terms Anthony was allowed to travel with the company for the purpose of retailing confectionery, fruit, lemonade, etc. For this privilege he paid the show nine dollars a week. Oddly, if he could afford it, he was to pay ten dollars a week. The manager sold his horse and wagon to him and the terms of the payment for them were part of the contract."⁶

Circus proprietor, George S. Cole, relates that Aaron Turner's Circus sold candy at Potsdam, New York, as well as at other show dates during the season of 1849 and beyond. The *Billboard* account states: "The candy stand privilege was rented for one dollar a day. The privilege outfit consisted of a one-horse light wagon built cage fashion with a sunken bottom and about half of one side opened outward and formed a shelf for the layout, consisting of candy, ginger bread, lemonade, circus fans, etc. A man sat inside to wait on customers. No butcher worked on the seats and they had no outside stand. The candy wagon was placed inside the tent near the front door."⁷

In 1863, Den Stone, famous clown and circus equestrian, paid Mabie Bros. Circus \$40 for the candy privilege; this was recorded at the end of the day on May 24th when Mabie exhibited at Ottawa, Illinois. This privilege was renewed at intervals during the remainder of the season as noted below:

May 31 Galesburg, Illinois, Sunday, no show \$40.00 from Stone for candy privilege.

June 21 Iowa City, Iowa, Sunday, no show. Stone paid privilege fee.

June 22 Pella, Iowa, Day show. Stone paid fee.

July 18 Keosauqua, Iowa, Day



The menagerie stand on Barnum & Bailey in 1904.

show only. Stone paid privilege fee of \$20.00.

July 25 Carthage, Illinois. Day show. Stone made privilege payment.

August 8 Rushville, Illinois, Stone paid fee.

August 18 St. Louis, Missouri, Stone paid candy privilege. Sunday, no show.

September 12 Grayville, Missouri, Day show, Stone paid privilege fee.

September 19 Evansville, Missouri, Day show, Stone paid privilege fee.

September 26 Loogootee, Missouri, Day show, Stone paid weekly privilege fee of \$140.00.

October 10 Lexington, Indiana, Day show. Stone paid fee.

Burt Webster was employed as a candy butcher and sold candy, lemonade and cigars to patrons. Harry Buckley paid \$1,000 for the side show privilege that season. (All Mabie Brothers data, courtesy of W. Gordon Yadon, 1999.)

Barnum & Bailey in their 1888 route book⁸ mention that Hagar & Henslow were the managers of the

Two small midway stands on Barnum & Bailey around 1910.



confectionery department. George Arlington was the superintendent of the show. Of course the first candy sold was not the package variety that came into being sometime later.

The leasing of the candy privilege on all Ringling owned shows continued from

Butch Parsons to the Miller brothers who operated the candy stands until the under canvas show closed in 1956.

One should be reminded that the sale of confections and other products on the seats was considered a nuisance from the earliest of times. Even Odell in his gigantic compilation, *Annals of the New York Stage*, reminded readers that similar objections were expressed about the circus in those days as well. Thayer points out that Cooper, Bailey & Company, in 1878, "decided to do away with seat vendors, no doubt as a reaction to such complaints" that the nuisance of selling created. "J. L. Hutchinson took over the privileges with the show in 1880, and he continued the practice of not allowing vending in the seats." Other shows evoked similar policies. These included the Barnum & London Circus of 1881 as well as Sells Brothers the same year. In spite of distaste for the candy butcher selling items on the seats, it continued outside the main tent and side show. In time the vending of confections on the seats returned to most circuses, but again in the 1990s Kenneth Feld of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus reinstituted the ban. Not all circuses followed his lead.

It should be noted that candy wasn't the only item sold from a candy stand or wagon. In practicality, the candy wagon is an all-inclusive term, so one shouldn't be surprised to find a wide range of products sold from a candy wagon or stand, such as popcorn, balloons, fans, and trinkets of all sorts associated with candy stands.

Joe Bradbury in a *Bandwagon* article on a *Bandwagon* Brothers Circus lists the inventory of that circus during the 1924-1925 season:⁹

Candy Stands

- 7 Stock boxes \$14.00
- 1 small ice box 5.00
- 1 hamburger box 5.00
- 1 hamburger griddle 5.00
- 1 hamburger box complete 10.00
- 16 counter jacks 16.00
- 7-10 ft. boards 14.00
- 12 side poles 6.00
- 5 center poles 5.00
- 1 umbrella stake .50
- 14 small stakes 2.00
- 10 water pails 3.50
- 2 candy tops and wall 40.00
- 4 ice cream trays 2.00
- 10 pop trays 5.00
- 2 water kegs 2.00
- 1 water can 2.00
- 2 sledge hammers 3.50
- 1 wash tub 1.25
- 1 gasoline burner 5.00

Circuses of any great size and success were comprised of the workingmen or roustabouts, the performers, the official staff and other white-collar workers. The former group of employees outnumbered the others, and, according to John M. Staley, the latter groups were the prominent employees of the circus; next came the butchers of the candy department.¹⁰ It has been written that, "To be a candy butcher or to operate one of the concession stands was a sign of success. Men were hired every day as in other work departments. Where men were chosen they were above the run-of-the-mill working man."¹¹ Staley was a candy butcher on the Ringling circus; he also worked with three of the well-known boss butchers, namely, Sid Reuben, Frank Shaffer and Lea Cook. Barnum & Bailey employed Shaffer before the merger with the Ringling Circus.¹²

In 1890 Sells Brothers & S. H. Barrett's Combined Circus route book lists one candy car as part of their circus train. The circus maintained at least one candy wagon on the midway, another near the side show and at least one, sometimes two, in the menagerie tent leading to the big top.

When the Adam Forepaugh-Sells Brothers Circus opened 1911 in Vincennes, Indiana, Will J. Farley, the reporter, wrote:¹³ "Before we



The menagerie candy stand on Patterson-Gollmar in 1917.

entr enter the tent, let me pause again to congratulate Charles Bell upon the attractiveness of his candy stand. His pink lemonade had the circus color and flavor, and none of the 'Cy Perkinson' or 'Little Willes' could pass it by."

Campbell-Bailey-Hutchison Circus and Wild West converted an old Orton cage wagon into a candy wagon in 1920.

Members of the circus crew were a loyal and closely-knit group. In October 1894, Dan Lester, a singing clown, with the F. F. Davis Mammoth Empire Show, became ill with the dreaded pneumonia. He left a note in his dressing tent, and entered a hospital at Buffalo, New York. Every performer and member of the candy stand signed his or her name on a card, and along with a cash donation, sent it to him.

The circus was not without incidents of crime. The circus employees themselves usually handled these.

A menagerie stand on Sells-Floto. Circus World Museum collection



One such incident occurred at Murray City, Ohio, in August 1902. Dan Lester sang with Sun Brothers World's Progressive Shows in 1902. The show and concert were over, but trouble was expected. Al Lynch, privilege man, was about to take down the candy tent, when about 150 or 200 men, some of whom were drunk, surrounded him. They attacked by consuming all his lemonade, took his popcorn and pulled his cap down over his eyes. The "governor," George Sun, saw what was happening and the cry went out, "Hey Rubel!" Help was forthcoming almost immediately and the night was saved.

One of the early candy butchers on the Gentry-Patterson Circus (1923-1925) was Edward C. Brown. During the 1922-1923 winter he was also in charge of the cookhouse at quarters at Paola, Kansas. The tenting season of 1924 found him chef on the advance car as well as superintendent of candy stands. He had a great deal of responsibility because concessions were a large part of the circus, then and today.

Art Thorpe reported that for the 1923 season on the lot of the Sparks Circus all concessions--such as sandwiches, soft drinks, ice cream, frozen custard and candy--were usually sold for just five cents. He was in charge of purchases, stocking and billing in the concession department.

Charles H. Johnston¹⁴ of Los Angeles remembered a great deal about the activities concerning the candy wagon and was most gracious in supplying many facts included herein. He was on the Al G. Barnes Circus between 1928 and 1938 and was in charge of the candy wagon, No. 85, which usually carried the candy stands plus other items associated with concessions. Old No. 85 was a heavy wagon and was usually loaded with the remaining stock not sold during the previous day's sales as well as the stands. Items included bales of peanuts, candy, Cracker Jack,

wrapped popcorn, ice cream cones, cones for popcorn and novelties such as balloons and palm leaf fans. Orange syrup for making orange drinks and Dixie paper cups were also part of the supplies. Candy and fans were other big sellers then.

Johnston saw to it that at least a day's supply of merchandise was brought from the train to the circus lot each day. It was not uncommon to sell 150 cases (5,000 boxes) of Cracker Jack on a good day in an enthusiastic city. Thousands of bags of peanuts were sold to circus patrons, who, in turn, supplied elephants with their favorite treat. Candy sales often "went through the roof" on a good day with resulting high profits.¹⁵ Usually one concessionaire or candy butcher acted as cashier at the concession stand in the menagerie tent or midway area.

Either the boss butcher or the boss concessionaire prepared all of the orders for new supplies of candy and other items. Johnston¹⁶ went into town and sent the necessary telegrams for orders, and it was his responsibility to pick up the merchandise at the local Railway Express Office or Post Office.¹⁷ The items were often stored in the possum belly of a rail coach or a concession wagon. Johnston tried to keep his suppliers aware of the route of the show so as to be able to expedite delivery, etc. The Railway Express shipments usually came via regular scheduled railroad passenger trains, seldom via freights.

Usually members of the concession staff were furnished both a berth on the train and meals in the cook tent on the lot.¹⁸ With the advent of the motorized circus, these gents often drove their own vehicle or, more likely, accompanied another employee. In the case of Ringling Brothers, the Miller Brothers concession van was usually carried on one of the circus trains.

It was often difficult to hold a good boss candy butcher for more than a couple of tenting seasons. If the butcher remained with the same circus more than one sea-



A midway stand on Sells-Floto in 1927. Circus World Museum collection.

son, it was often customary during Johnston's time for the butcher to be given work on a commission basis--ten percent of total sales with a 5% holdback.¹⁹

The year 1938 was the last season for the AL. G. Barnes Circus. It joined Ringling-Barnum in July, at Redfield, South Dakota, as a result of the untimely strike against the latter circus at labor conscious Scranton, Pennsylvania. Johnston²⁰ wrote that the circus carried two candy wagons after the merger. Wagon No. 85 was considered a baggage wagon that was assigned to the concession department; the wheels were steel-tired,²¹ and it was spotted near the marquee for the big top and a second one (Ringling) was near by. An additional Ringling concession wagon was the so-called "ice house"; and it was the name given it and a small tent was adjacent to it. Nothing was sold the public from

A group Sparks butchers wearing Baby Ruth white jackets in 1928.



this wagon. At the close of the 1938 season, it was shipped to Peru, Indiana²² and eventually sent to Sarasota, Florida, Ringling winter quarters and destroyed there in the early 1940s.

Sells-Floto Circus owned wagon No. 85 between 1929 and 1932; in 1924 their concession tent measured 12' by 18'.

Charles Pelke was with Ringling Brothers Circus from 1915 to 1922; in 1922 he was superintendent of concessions with Sells-Floto Circus. He was with the latter circus until 1932. Teddy Williams was in charge of the frozen custard with Sells-Floto. Pelke joined the AL G. Barnes Circus from 1933 to 1938. He married Mabel Ward, a member of the Flying Wards, on January 21, 1924, in Chicago; the couple lived at 4601 Dover Street in the latter city.²³

Frank Gavin served in many capacities with various circuses starting in 1914. He was superintendent of concessions as well as manager of candy stands in 1923, 1924 and 1925 on Sells-Floto Circus.

In 1922, he was a member of the executive staff of the John Robinson Circus. For many years candy wagon No. 64 carried concession department items as well as candy stand equipment on the Sells-Floto Circus; this wagon remained in service well into the early 1940s.

Earl Chapin May, one of the first writers of circus history,²⁴ revisited the white tops in the early 1920s and talked with Gavin.²⁵ May later wrote that he continued to prod Gavin to tell him about "the good old days," so finally, Gavin gave in to May's request:²⁶ "The gross income of my department now runs close to ten percent of the gross income of the Big Show. If the Big Show has a bad day, as manager of the candy department, I have a bad day. If the big show does well, so do I. There is so little variation in the *ratio* between the big show business and the candy-butcher business that I

can tell after I have counted up at night within a few dollars of what the ticket wagon had taken in. If the ticket wagon total for the day is \$12,000, my total for the day will be \$1200.00.

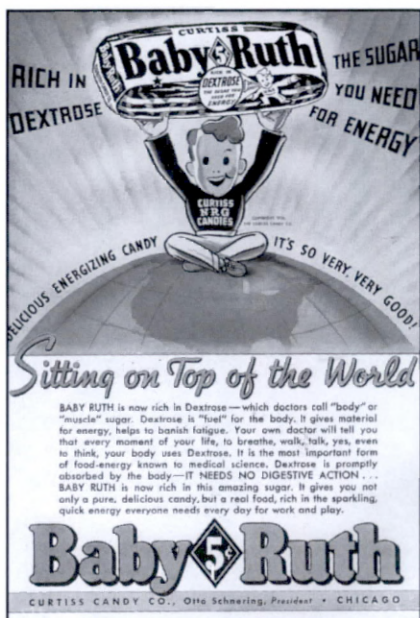
"The people who come to see our show spend between \$200,000 and \$250,000 a year with the candy butcher. But I couldn't reach that season's gross if I did not understand something about the psychology of color. This applies especially to bottled drinks, popcorn bricks, and balloons. The bright-colored drinks sell the best; red first, yellow next and white last. The candy butcher had to produce or get out of the concession business.

"If I had checked in that afternoon after only selling a part of one box [brick popcorn bars] and [another boss butcher on the Ringling Show] had sold four or five boxes, he would have been as mad as a pistol."

Frank Gavin went on to explain: ²⁷ "They [butchers] sure have to work for their money. They operate on a salary and commission basis, mostly commission with board and Pullman space such as it is, and is free. Some of them make \$3,000 or more a week, they can't do it and loaf on the job. Farm boys are more apt to be more honest than city boys. At least that's my experience but we watched them pretty close. Mrs. Gavin checks them in and out of the supply stand if they are working in the big top. I check them frequently on the outside stands. They have no chance to cheat us. But if we watch any of them cheating our customers, out they go. And they meet a great deal of temptation.

"If the candy butcher can't build up a repeat business, he will starve to death. The old slogan around the white tops used to be 'we are here today and gone tomorrow.' Now circuses operate on the principle: 'We're coming back here next season.'"

Frank Gavin recalled further how the attitude of the candy butcher, the public and the circus had changed over the years:²⁸ "One afternoon I bought ten cents' worth of peanuts from a young man in white coat and cap who was working the seats with Sells-Floto Circus. The performance was at its most thrilling stage. The young man gave me fifteen cents in



This Baby Ruth ad appeared in the 1938 Cole Bros. Circus program.

change. I dropped ten cents of it through the seats to the grass beneath. Both of us looked at the bright, thin dime, lying four feet below my perch. It was my dime if I was willing to retrieve it, which I was not. The young man in the white coat and cap was in a hurry. He slipped me another dime. 'I'll take the loss,' he said. At the conclusion of the performance, the dime still lay there on the circus lot grass. I suppose some canvas man finally found it. Times have changed around the white tops.

This 1931 Ringling-Barnum butcher wore the price on his cap.



"A few years ago that butcher-boy who took his ten-cent loss because of my carelessness would have spoken rudely to me and told me to go hence. Or he might have charged me double price. Now, every boy working the seats or behind the candy stand counters wears in his cap a legend showing the price for which his wares are sold. And the boys are clean and courteous. How come? Is the circus business losing its old tang? Are you cutting out the rough stuff? All things change in this world, even circuses. The intelligent critic who is forever telling you that all circuses are alike is wrong. All circuses are alike in that no circus is complete without the clown, the elephant and the candy butcher. Omit one of these standard features and circus patrons would demand their money back. But we live in an age of demanding quality, quantity and prompt service. Hence circuses are not like they used to be. Where in the old days, the towners on the blue seats and reserves were content with one bull that sat up in a tub, now they must have a herd of ponderous pachyderms. Where lone George Conklin or Jules Tournour once tickled them with a clown song, there must be forty Merry Andrews kicking up their heels, and where any kind of food or drink went, at any price, on the circus seats or on the circus lot, us candy butchers now have to give people the goods and give them straight. Gavin was referring to George Conklin's brother, Peter Conklin, the great songster of the sawdust ring. Circus folks are just a lap ahead in the march of progress, that's all."

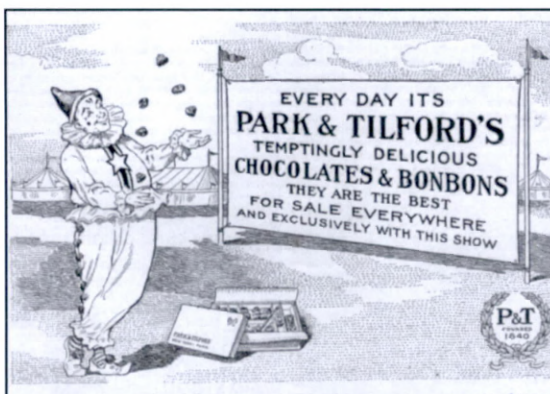
Jacks usually supported the candy stands and counters, and often product banners hung from the front side of the counter to alert the public as to what was for sale. The menagerie tent stands, together with the sideshow tents, poles and counter boards were all loaded on to the sides of the candy wagon (or concession wagon); iron tent stakes and accessory roping were put into the possum belly near and under the rear of the wagon. Usually one candy butcher was the boss butcher and he acted as cashier. He was often the man who had been at the job and with the circus for several good seasons. In

other words, he was the one the management could rely on to return for another season. There was usually a rapid turnover of candy butchers, just as in many fast-food operations today.

Staley writes that the card on the butcher's cap also stated "pay no more!"²⁹ This warning sign was sort of a big joke, according to Staley, who, himself, was a candy butcher. It seems that the butchers often charged whatever the traffic would bear, and, "when asked by a circus goer why they were being charged more than the sign on the cap read, answered, "That was the price outside at the afternoon performance," if it was now the evening performance.³⁰ During the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, some of the remaining tented circuses had difficulty getting the candy butcher to charge only the printed price on the cap. The fact that 10 cents was marked on his cap did not always mean that the butcher abided by it. Some butchers would often charge 10 cents on some lower bleachers while higher up, lo and behold, the price was 15 cents or even 25 cents. This unethical practice became a nightmare for not only the boss butcher, but for management and owners, but eventually things settled down. Ringling did everything in its power to prevent such things from happening on its circus lot.

John Hanson, a former band member of Sells-Floto-Buffalo Bill Circus (1914-1915) under Karl King as bandmaster, recalled:³¹ "The candy butchers sold candy and cigarettes, and in those days the cigarette companies put coupons in each pack of cigarettes and these were redeemable. The box butcher would often remove the coupons from the packs before the seat butchers went out onto the seats, and as a result he amassed a large number of coupons; he redeemed them himself for various gifts and one such butcher nearly furnished his home with furniture because of his dishonest tactics.

Hanson indicated that most honest circus and carnival owners and managers frowned on



This Park & Tilford ad appeared in the 1911 Miller Bros. & Arlington 101 Ranch Wild West program.

such practices, but it was difficult to control.

As time passed the nature of the candy sold changed and the packaged candy bar with its colorful wrapper and boxes of chocolates came into vogue. In addition all sorts of bags of soft and hard candy appeared in an ever-expanding market. The *Billboard* was crowded with ads. Small boxes of chocolates came from the Universal Theater Concession company which contracted with the Al. G. Barnes Circus, Sparks, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Robbins Brothers, Sells-Floto, Barnum & Bailey, and many others for this type of novelty packaged candy. Chester Pelke of Sells-Floto worked out arrangements for all of the above circuses; the home base of this firm was Chicago.³² The Brody Novelty Candy Package Company, Inc. was a candy

This Tow Candy Company ad appeared in a 1921 *Billboard*. Author's collection.

ATTENTION!

CANDY MEN, SALESBOARD OPERATORS

MAKE YOUR OWN DEALS

Best Offer on Box Candy This Season

TOW'S FAVORITE ONE POUND BOX ASSORTMENT.

Consists of one pound of hand-dipped assorted Chocolate Creams, Chocolate-coated Nougats and Chocolate-dipped Caramels. Packed in double layer box, wrapped and sealed and tied with red ribbons.....

\$3.00 Per Doz.

1/4-pound boxes, same assortment as above..... \$1.80 Per Doz.

We are manufacturers. (NO MIDDLE MAN'S PROFIT HERE). Candy made fresh every day. Orders always shipped immediately. Convince yourself of our quality. Sample order of one dozen boxes sent for your approval on receipt of money order.

One-half cash deposit required on all orders, balance C. O. D.

TOW CANDY COMPANY,

960 W. Harrison Street, CHICAGO, ILL.

company located in New York; it, too, supplied many circuses with this type of candy in 1929 and thereafter.³³ Park and Tilford, a manufacturer of chocolates, was the only seller of a packaged candy at the Madison Square Garden during the New York City engagement of the Ringling-Barnum Circus. One of their candy butchers tells the following about the engagement there:³⁴ "About half an hour after the doors at each performance had been opened this man would bring a case of chocolates into the arena. He would take out six or eight boxes of chocolates push the case off the aisle and then would take a look at the sections of seats on both sides of the aisle he was going to work. Shortly he would start up the steps, always picking out young couples, if possible. Then, he would 'mitt' a box of chocolates into the lap of a girl or young lady. If she tried to give it back he would keep going up the steps very slowly. He would follow the same procedure until he reached the last row. He would then return to the first row from the aisle and start to collect from the men. He also did this slowly. Should he make a sale off the first couple, and then he had it made all the way to the last row. Then he would move over to the next aisle and start all over again until he had made a complete circle of the arena and box seats. He only sold the Park & Tilford choice chocolates in the Garden."

The Curtis Candy Company, makers of the delicious "Baby Ruth" candy bar supplied circus concessionaires with the bar. The candy bar was not named for Babe Ruth, the home run king (1927-1998); the name honors the daughter of President and Mrs. Grover Cleveland who was endearingly referred to as "Baby Ruth." A company that is now a part of the chocolate giant, Nestle's, USA, introduced the bar in the early 1920s.³⁵ This firm has no historical documents that indicate circus butchers or vendors purchased candy directly from the home office, but rather it was obtained through candy wholesalers. We know that the "Baby Ruth" bar was sold on

circuses because candy butchers were supplied with coats with the name of the candy bar on them.

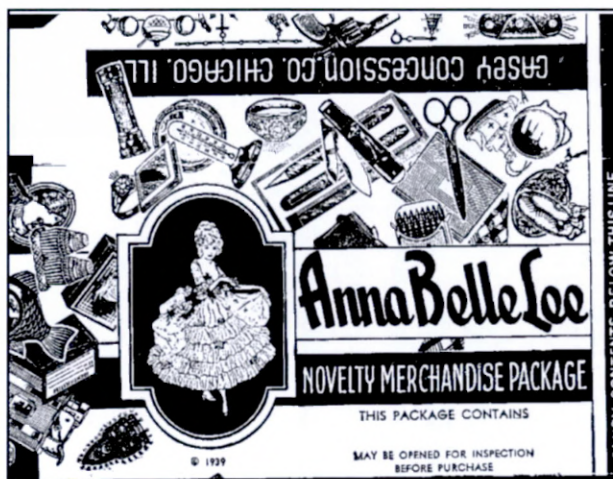
In like manner, Mars marketed the "Milky Way" for the first time in 1923. By 1930 "Snickers" appeared, and in 1932 the familiar "3 Musketeers" filled grocery shelves. Again the company is unable to document direct sales of their candy bars at the point of origin to the circus candy butcher or his boss. All three bars are still made today. There is little question that these bars were and are favorites at circuses across America.

C. P. Fox and Tom Parkinson provide a candid look at the sales pitch for boxes of candy in their intriguing book, *The Circus in America* (1969):³⁶ "With nearly everyone in their seats and only a few stragglers coming from the menagerie into the big top, the ticket seller bandmen disappeared. A hush fell over the audience, the performance was about to start. Now the announcer stepped to the center and everyone anticipated the first thrill of the circus.

"But that is not what the man proclaimed. Instead he announced that, 'In a few weeks the Casey Candy Company of Chicago, Illinois, will place on the market a new confection.' It would be available at your favorite candy, gift and department stores at two dollars per half-pound box. But as a special introductory offer, arranged through the generosity of the circus, the company was able to offer the candy here and now at a more favorable price.

"Furthermore, each box would contain some gift of value. There was a wide range of gifts including 'Mickey Mouse wrist watches, Kodak cameras, nylon hose for the ladies,' and who knows what all. The circus had allowed just ten minutes for this introductory advertising offer, according to the announcer, and for this brief period agents 'will pass among you, offering the prize candy at just twenty-five cents a box.'

"At that cue a battalion



The Anna Belle Lee prize candy was made in Chicago in 1939 by Al and Bill Carsky's Casey Concession Co. Al Stencell collection.

of white-coated concession men with bulky cases of candy moved toward the seats. Holding high a handful of candy boxes, they asked who would be first, and the man at the center again was saying, 'Mickey Mouse wristwatches, Kodak cameras, and nylons for the ladies.'

"Invariably the response to this candy pitch was tremendous. Children and adults alike clamored for the attention of the vendors. They pushed quarters at him as fast as he could take them, and the man at the center was saying: 'There's a winner of a wristwatch. Hold it high, sir, so all can see; over there's a camera and here is a pocketknife; all you winners hold your prizes high.' There were prizes, even some as described by the announcer, but more

A candy stand on Sparks Circus in 1930.



often they were paper novelties or plastic toys. The candy was not very good.

"It made no difference. The vendors soon exhausted their first supplies and went down to the center poles for new cases. Often people who had bought a box the first time now wanted a second. Still the man at the center kept up his patter, and still the audience bought. But as the time grew short and the edge was off the market, he had one more volley to fire.

Excitedly he called to his vendors and breathlessly ordered them to 'Stop the sales. Come down out of the seats.' Now, he explained to the audience, because there still seemed to be a few doubters among his listeners, he had special instructions for his salesmen. 'Set aside the case you have now,' he said loudly. 'Take now those special cases, the ones with the heavy boxes, the ones with the bigger prizes.' Then he explained to the audience that only three minutes remained. Now for the third time the vendors swarmed into the audience, nearly bending under the weight of those heavier boxes.

"Again the audience bought. Again the boxes and the quarters flowed freely. Again there were more wristwatches, nylons, cameras, paper novelties and plastic toys. When it seemed the audience had been worked heavily enough and sales might slacken, the announcer declared the time was up, that unfortunately the circus management required the vendors to pull out. The candy pitch was over."

The candy stand in a circus of any size--such as Barnum & Bailey, Ringling Brothers, Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Robbins, and many more--was in the menagerie tent with the animal cages lined up along one side of the tent; and along the opposite side (for at least a portion) the elephants held forth--a great attraction to



The menagerie candy stand on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1932.

"children of all ages." Between the center poles at one end was a big candy stand. The giraffes and their wagons, camels, and zebra were also spotted in the vicinity of this all-important stand.

However, there were usually concession stands on the outside of the main tents. Fox and Parkinson have provided an excellent description of that area.³⁷ "Outside on the midway again, the opposite edge was lined with concession stands and ticket wagons. First was a lemonade stand where large glass tanks of pink or green lemonade were visible. There were castle-like towers made of Cracker Jack boxes and huge wicker baskets containing striped sacks of peanuts. Odors of onions and grease rose from the hot plate where a spatula-wielding attendant hawked his wares. Another stand might offer creamy frozen custard and still another sold cotton candy, that super concoction spun into a huge colored ball that melted away to nothing when eaten. If the peanuts were few or the ice cream drippy or the cotton candy sticky, it really did not seem to matter.

"At the head of the midway was the novelty stand. This was a huge trunk opened to reveal its inventory of flags and canes and whips and birds on a string. Little kegs were set alongside the trunk to hold added supplies of circus novelties. Out of all this flashing color surely something was bound to attract the eye of every little tyke that passed the stand. The novelty man was not above placing one of his products into the hand of a six-year-old, knowing full well the child would cry if his prize were taken away. Maybe, just maybe, the parent would conclude he

would rather buy the toy whip than hear the tearful wail.

"The candy butcher was usually well shaven with a clean set of work clothes each morning.

The management furnished the coveralls and these were picked up at the end of each day and sent to the laundry to be picked up by the concession department the next day. The candy butcher also wore a white jacket and on his head was a white box-like hat with a card attached which carried the price of the item being sold."

In pre-railroading days, Ringling Brothers employed George Zeisinger as the man in charge of candy stands and sales in 1887.⁵² This was the first time after the founding of the circus in 1884 that candy, candy stands or candy tops are mentioned, remembering that "candy" didn't just refer to candy as we think of it today. Albert (Al "Butch") Parsons ran the candy stands in 1890, and later,⁵³ but the concession privileges are not mentioned in 1891, 1892, or 1893 in circus documents that have been examined.⁵⁴ However, in 1911, Sid Ruben was superintendent of the candy wagon (#65). It was carried on circus flatcar #157 of the first or flying squadron section of the train. The following year (1912), the same candy wagon (#65) "... cost \$200.00 and it came to them after being rebuilt by the famous Moeller brothers of Baraboo, Wisconsin."⁵⁵

In 1913, Ringling Bros. employed Sid Ruben again as their concession superintendent.⁵⁶

Frank and Paul Miller had the concessions on Ringling-Barnum for a number of years, paying a flat yearly fee. In addition to the usual Coke, popcorn, Cracker Jacks, candy bars, floss and novelties the Millers operated the midway Frozen Delight truck and the grease joint.

According to the 1940 route book of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Combined Circus their concession department was the Miller Brothers Concession Company, owned and operated by Frank and Paul Miller.³⁸ Frank and Paul had run the concessions for the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus in 1937.³⁹ In 1940, the candy department employed the following men: Morris Ashry, cashier; Robert Brown, stockman; Frank Morris, contact man; George Martin, side show; Ernest Hitchcock, manager of candy stand; Jack Besser, Nate Abraham, V.C. Kasher, menagerie candy stand butchers; Vernon Long, Eugene O'Connor, Eli Duck-er, Eddie McAleer, Max Steinhart, Sam Gold, William White, Roy Wallace, Irving Dubin, James Brown, Stanley Gregory, Abe Starinsky, John Price, Jack Golden, Gus Signer, Arthur Katz, Howard Williams, Philip Billings, Al Rodd, John Kotec, seat men for candy sales.

The Ringling-Barnum route book for 1941⁴⁰ lists the name of Miller Brothers Concession Company as the Coastal Trading Company; the same was true for 1942.⁴¹ It was an apt name since the circus wintered at

Gene Weeks and his candy department on Cole Bros. Circus in 1937.



Sarasota, Florida, at the time. Jack Harris is set down as Frank Miller's assistant. There was a candy top with Mel Hamblin as manager. The name of Max Miller (brother of Frank and Paul) appeared for the first time that season as cashier, and William Vining was in charge of stock supplies. W. Williams and P. McGriff were candy porters. There were menagerie candy stands with Jack Besser, Volney Kashner and Frank Morris as employees and Ernest Hitchcock operated a midway candy stand.

In 1943, the Miller brothers changed their company's name to the Miller Brothers Concession Company and managed Ringling's concession then and for many years thereafter.⁴² The candy department employed the following:⁴³ James Hamlin, manager of the candy top; J. Besser, No. 1 candy stand, A. Stryker, No. 2 candy stand; E. Hitchcock, No. 3 candy stand

In 1944, Miller Brothers Concessions again was with the circus, with Frank C. and Paul Miller in charge; Jack Harris was their assistant.⁴⁴ Bill White, stockman; Pat Connolly, personnel; Jim Hamlin, manager of the candy top Max Miller, assistant cashier; Jack Besser, candy stand 1; Stryker, stand 2; Frank Miller, stand 3.

In 1948, Miller Brothers Concession Company was on the lot again with the following personnel:⁴⁵ Mel Hamblin, manager, candy top; J. Legrys, assistant manager and W. White, stock man

In 1949, their personnel were:⁴⁶ Mel Hamblin, manager; W. Kornberg, checker and J. Sanders, stock man

In 1951⁴⁷, the route book lists only the Miller Brothers Concessions Company; there was a candy top. Concession workers were Jack Sanders, stock, and Tom Pence, checker. There were the usual all important menagerie stands.



In the 1940s and 1950s Coca Cola supplied concession tents and fixtures in exchange for exclusive sale of their product. This stand was in the 1944 Cole Bros. menagerie. Circus World Museum collection.

In 1952, Frank C. Miller and Paul Miller were in charge of concessions with Jack Harris as their assistant. Others were:⁴⁸ James Mel Hamblin, manager, candy top; Pat Connolly, midway stand manager; Jack Sanders, checker; Morris Gustow, manager, novelty department; L. Blumenthal, manager of candy; M. Gustow and V. LeBow, No. 1 stand in menagerie tent. L. Gustow, No. 2 stand; J. Besser, No. 1 stand menagerie; E. Vaughn, No. 3 stand; F. Morris, No. 2 stand menagerie; A. Zimmerman, No. 4 stand; S. Gregory, E. Zapata, B. Begun, C. Rodriguez, F.

A midway candy stand on Ringling-Barnum in 1947.



Dillon, R. Wallace, J. Lauriello, L. J. Stanley, M. White, J. Beaupre, Wm. White, F. Skura, J. Geiger, C. Rosal, F. Keating, A. Rodrigues, C. Myarr, L. Fox, E. Couture and L. Leiden, seat butchers. R. Billinger, manager, two midway stands. Wm. Maguire, manager, No.1; A. Anderson, manager, No. 2; W. Kloss and H. Carr, workers. O. Vaughn, No. 3 stand; F. Morris, No. 2 Smith, manager, stock wagon; W. Coyle, manager, backyard stand. E. Hall and G. Allen, assistants; M. Short and C. Cherry, assistants; Max Miller, manager, Frozen Delight (Frozen Custard); F. Miller, J. Pilla, J. Molinari; P. Anderson, manager, Candy Floss stand No. 1; F. Voloesuk and C. Slaten, assistants; A. Christiani, manager, Candy Floss stand No. 2; G. Columbo, assistant; J. Littler, manager, popcorn; R. Swane, E. Pickett and H. Bush, helpers; J. Trosey, manager, Chameleon department (a very popular item); M. Healey and L. Rosenberg, assistants. There was also a soft drink concession.

The 1953 season again found the Millers in charge of overall concessions, with Jack Harris as their assistant. Other personnel were:⁴⁹ Jas. Mel Hamblin, manager, candy top; Morris Ashry, checker, candy top; J. Wood, J. Anthony, soft drink department; J. Besser, manager, No. 1 menagerie stand; F. Morris, manager, No. 2 menagerie stand; Paul Fisher, manager, No. 1 midway stand

C. Young and F. Bell, assistants; S. Ventura, manager, candy stand; O. Smith, manager, stock wagon; E. Hall, F. McCloud, G. Allen, assistants; Max Miller, manager, Frozen Delight

F. Mills, Wm. Carroll, G. Zolymi, assistants; J. Littler, manager, popcorn stand; H. Whitman, E. Pickett, R. Swain, R. Paul; assistants; P. Anderson, manager, No. 1 candy floss; H. Mansfield, J.T. Kelly, and R. Zoppis, assistant; A. Christiani, manager, No. 2 candy floss.

The season of 1954⁵⁰ found Miller Brothers in place with the same upper echelon in charge as in 1953: Mel Hamblin, manager, candy top; M. Ashry, assistant manager; L. Blumenthal, manager, menagerie stand; J. Besser, Stand No. 1; F. Morris, Stand No. 2; H. Carter—purchaser of supplies, W. Powell, stock man.

The midway stands had the following manager and assistants: Stand No. 1, F. Fisher; J. Clark, O. Smith and H. Horton; Stand No. 2, G. Hart; D. McNelly and W. Jackson

Stand No. 3, A. Powell and A. Moore; Frozen Delight (Frozen custard) was still managed by Max Miller, with F. Mills, J. Reed, and H. Dickman as assistants. F. Skura managed Candy Floss, and J.T. Kelly and G. Ferroni were butchers. J. Trocey managed the chameleon department along with butchers, M. Healy and L. Rosenberg. There were twenty-four seat butchers

In 1953 there were 17 butchers, 25 in 1954 and 19 in 1955.

Miller Brothers Concessions, in 1955⁵¹, (Frank C. Miller, Paul Miller, and Jack Harris, their assistant) was composed of the following departments: Novelty (M. Gustow, manager); Midway stands (Diner, W. Maguire, mgr., M. Moran and W. Schmitt), No. 1 stand, P. Fisher, mgr., C. Ballard, O. Smith, H. Somerset, No. 2 stand, W. Carroll, manager, O. Williams. Soft Drink Department, Popcorn Department, J. Littler, manager; J. Hayes, L. Lacella, R. Swain, R. Swinney. Menagerie Candy Stands, No. 1, J. Besser, No. 2, R. Morris, J. Guzman, Popcorn. Purchaser of Supplies, H. Carter. Stock Man, W. Powell; Frozen Delight, M. Miller, manager; F. Mills, J. Molinari and J. Reed; Candy Floss, F. Skura, manager; B. Kidd, A. Sontaine and A. Schwartz, side show, C. Anderegg. There were seventeen seat butchers that year.

The various departments within Miller Brothers Concessions in 1956 were designated as



Jean Allen and her cotton candy stand on Dailey Bros. in 1948.

the novelty department (6 men), seat men (4), midway candy stands (dinner and two stands with a total of 9 men), stock wagon (3 men), soft drink (2 men), popcorn (5 men), backyard stand for performers (3 men), menagerie stands (3 men), purchaser of supplies, H. Carter and a stock man), frozen delight (custard) (4 men), candy floss (4 men), chameleon (4 men), side show stand (1 man), seat butchers (19 men). Equipment for all these departments required six wagons; these were carried in the first two sections of the circus train.

Concession wagon #65 appeared on Cole Bros. Circus in 1936; its companion wagon was #64, and it carried the confection known as frozen custard.⁵⁷ It was still with the Cole

A midway stand on Mills Bros. Circus in 1950. Circus World Museum collection.



Bros. Circus in 1937 and continued to be used in 1938 as a concession wagon.⁵⁸ It was also used in 1939, 1940, and possibly in 1941; and certainly in 1944. In 1939, concession wagon #29 was loaded on flatcar #133 along with a Mack truck, frozen custard and a seat jack wagon. A second concession wagon, #46, was carried on the same flatcar in the Ringling train. Ringling's loading order for 1940 lists the second section of the train as carrying flat car #148 with the frozen delight wagon, the third section carried flat car #121 with concession truck 201, fol-

lowed by car #116 with the novelty concession wagon, and flatcar #126 carried the candy concession truck.⁵⁹ When the circus departed its stand in Chicago on August 10, 1941, the loading order was flatcar #148 which held wagon #46 of the concession department and the second section carried #145 with the Frozen Delight concession truck; #129 novelty wagon and #48; on car #150 concession wagon #201 was carried on the third section of the train.⁶⁰ In 1942⁶¹, the candy stand wagon was spotted between Gargantua's cage and the entrance leading into the big top from the menagerie tent. The same was true in 1943, 1944, and 1945. In the latter year⁶², Mel Hamlin was manager of the candy top. There were 28 butchers for the reserved and non-reserved seats in the Big Top. In 1946, there was also a candy top with Mel Hamlin as manager and 18 butchers.⁶³ That year concession wagons were numbered 46, 48, and 102 (candy); wagon #103 carried concession items as well as the backyard diner, and #107 carried concessions for themselves. Thus we see the sale of concessions was a big operation and an excellent moneymaker.

In 1947⁶⁴, the candy top was manned by Mel Hamlin as manager, with R. Keadley as assistant and W. Whiting as stockman. There were 21 butchers on the seats. In 1950, the flatcar roster

included:⁶⁵

Flatcar #116 concession stock wagon, #20

Flat car #150 concession wagon and side show panels

Flatcar #151 - concession stands, wagon #48

Flatcar #105 - concession wagon, #60 with concession supplies

Flat car #104 - Frozen custard with no number

The following year (1951), flatcar #119 carried concession wagon #102 and wagon #48 with concession stands.⁶⁶

The only wagon listed in 1952⁶⁷ was #64 for the frozen custard concession vehicle on flatcar #229.⁶⁸

The following year (1953), the loading order was:⁶⁹

Flatcar # 6 - wagon # 81 (Float "Candy")

Flatcar #12 - wagon # 48 (Miller Brothers concession truck)

Flatcar #13 - wagon #102 (Miller Brothers concessions)

Flatcar #10 - wagon #103 (Miller Brothers concessions)

The train in 1954 was loaded at Sarasota, Florida, with its destination Washington, D. C. The following loading roster is noted:⁷⁰

Flatcar #235 - Miller Brothers Concessions, Sarasota to Baltimore, Maryland, May 18-29

Flatcar #115 - Frozen Custard Concession

Flatcar #116 - Miller Brothers Concessions

Flatcar #118 - Miller Brothers Concessions

The next calendar year (1955) finds:⁷¹

Flatcar #238, Frozen custard

Flatcar #120 - Wagon #103, Miller Brothers Concessions

Flatcar #120 - Wagon # 48, Miller Brothers Concessions

However, the route book for that season lists the following train loading order:⁷²

First section

Wagon #102, Miller wagon #49, Popcorn

Wagon #103, Miller Brothers, custard-no number assigned



The midway candy stand on Hendricks Bros. Circus. Author's collection.

In 1956, Wagon #48, a Miller Brothers Concessions vehicle, along with midway joint vehicle.⁷³ Wagon #60 carried concession supplies as did wagon #120.⁷⁴

Flatcar #103 - Wagon #102, Candy top

Flatcar #103 - Wagon #231, Concessions and side show canvas

Flat car #103 - Wagon #49, Popcorn sales and frozen custard

Ringling exhibited under tents for the last time in 1956.

In 1962, Coach #46 carried the candy butchers and other single men. Candy butchers had other chores around the lot besides hawking confection treats during the 1920s and early 1930s. A candy butcher with Ringling Brothers Circus in the 1920s related that:⁷⁵ "Between shows when the other departments were resting, the butchers had to work until nearly time for the doors to open for the evening performance. It was a rush to freshen up for the people to come in, and shortly after to go on the seats vending their wares. After the big spectacle was over [in the afternoon], all the seat butchers would check in at the main concession stand. The men who sold peanuts, popcorn and Cracker Jack helped to tear down the outside stand and then load the candy wagon. After the butchers had sold all the ice cream [they could] and their equipment was stored away on one of the big top wagons [another of the candy wagons], the one candy wagon had already been sent to the railroad crossing to be loaded on the flatcars. Then all the butchers would have to wait until the

night performance was over before they could start to tear down the big top."

Staley also wrote:⁷⁶ "During World War One the Ringling Circus never exhibited on Sunday, so it was a day off for most of the circus personnel. Sid Rubin did not mind his men going to the hotel on their day off, but all the

candy butchers and stand men had to make Sunday dinner in the cook house. Sid would always be sitting at his regular place at the staff table. The men had to pass his table to reach theirs. Anyone unlucky enough to miss a Sunday dinner would get a stiff penalty come Monday. All you had to do is ask me. I know as I missed a couple of times. The one I dreaded most was being in jail on the big stand in the menagerie. You had to do all the regular work that the other men performed, besides staying on the big top canvas crew."

During World War II, there was a severe shortage of manpower. They didn't try to recruit women in those days. The candy butchers, front door men, ticket sellers and ballet girls, as well as other butchers, had to help in other areas such as putting up and tearing down the big top.⁷⁷

Candy plays a very prominent and satisfying role in the life of each one of us. The American circus recognized this early in its history, and the sale of candy became an important addition to the gate revenues. The candy bar, the Candy Kiss, the taffy roll and the package of gum have always been and always will be for sale at most circuses, whether outdoors or indoors. Many a boy or girl was introduced to this treat at the ever-moving, ever-changing world of the circus.

Notes

1. Kunzog, John, 1962. *The One-Horse Show*, Jamestown, New York, pp. 359-367. Used by permission of Catherine Wright, Jamestown, N.Y.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 362

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 365-366

5. *Bandwagon*, Vol. 37(5):29

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Billboard*, August 13, 1904, p. 7.

Courtesy, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin

8. Route book of Barnum & Bailey Circus, 1888. Courtesy Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin

9. *Bandwagon*, Vol. 12(4), 1968, p. 13

10. *Ibid.*, Vol. 39 (5), 1995, pp. 25-29

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Billboard*, May 6, 1911, p. 4

14. Personal communication with Charles H. Johnston, September 11, 1964

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. *White Tops*, Vol. 48(6), 1975, p. 10

22. *Bandwagon*, Vol. 27(2)

23. *White Tops*, Vol. 48(6), 1975, p. 11; *Billboard*, February 2, 1924; and the Circus World Museum (5/1999).

24. *Collier's*, *The National Weekly*, April 4, 1925, pp. 13-14

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Bandwagon*, Vol. 39(5):28, 1995

30. *Ibid.*

31. Personal Interview with John Hanson

32. *White Tops*, Vol. 50(1), 1977

33. *Bandwagon*, Vol. 8(2), 1964

34. *Ibid.*, Vol. 39(5), 1995, p. 28

35. Personal communication with Nestle's, USA, 1999

36. Charles P. Fox and Tom Parkinson, *The Circus in America*, 1969

37. *Ibid.*

38. Route book of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, 1940:19-20

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*, 1941:19-20

41. *Ibid.*, 1942:17-18

42. *Ibid.*, 1943:19-20

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*, 1944

45. *Ibid.*, 1948:32-33

46. *Ibid.*, 1949:29

47. *Ibid.*, 1951:29-30

48. *Ibid.*, 1952:32-33

49. *Ibid.*, 1953:41

50. *Ibid.*, 1954:51

51. *Ibid.*, 1955

52. *WhiteTops*, July-August 1933



The midway concession trailer of Carson & Barnes Circus in 2002.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Bandwagon*, March-April, 1982

56. *Ibid.*, Vol. 37(2), 1993

57. *Ibid.*, Vol. 10(3), 1966

58. *Ibid.*

59. *White Tops*, Vol. 51(2), 1978

60. *Ibid.*, Vol. 51(3), 1978

61. *Ibid.*, Vol. 51(4), 1978

62. *Ibid.*, Vol. 55(2), 1982

63. *White Tops*, Vol. 55(6), 1982 and Route book of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Combined Circus, 1946

64. Route book of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Circus, 1947, p. 32

65. *White Tops*, Vol. 61(1), 1950

66. *Ibid.*, Vol. 61(4), 1988

67. *Ibid.*, Vol. 62(1), 1989

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.*, Vol. 62(3), 1989

70. *Ibid.*, Vol. 62(6), 1989

71. *Ibid.*, Vol. 63(4), 1990

72. Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Combined Circus, 1955:75-77

73. *White Tops*, Vol. 53(2), 1980

74. *Ibid.*, Vol. 64(1), 1991

75. *Bandwagon*, Vol. 39(5):26, 1995

76. *Ibid.*, 27

77. *Ibid.*, 27

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GREAT AMERICAN RIDERS

3. James Robinson "The Man Who Rides"

By Stuart Thayer

In the winter of 1848-1849 Robinson & Eldred's New York Circus played in Georgia and Florida. One of their performers appeared nine times in the program. Since they often gave two shows a day, this could entail eighteen acts daily. This athlete did tumbling, leaping, vaulting (all separate acts), the running globe, a carrying act with a little girl, a two-pony act with a young boy, a principal riding act using a pad, a bareback riding act, and an Indian scenic act. He was eleven years old. His stage name was James Robinson.

Born James Michael Fitzgerald in Boston in 1838, James Robinson was initially bound to John Gossin, the clown, in 1844. A year and a half later, in July 1845, Gossin sold the boy's time to showman John Robinson. Because he had run away from a religious orphanage (his father had died) the boy refused to tell John Robinson his name or from whence he had come. Robinson set him to learning circus skills, of which riding became his passion. By 1848, as we mentioned, he was doing a bareback act, and in 1851 he added somersault riding.

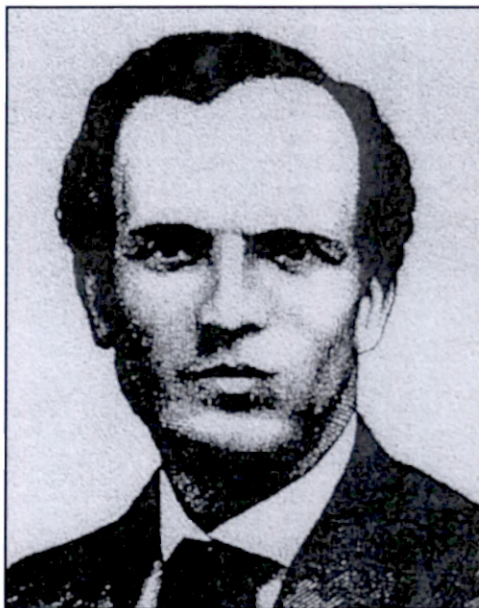
John Robinson trained several apprentices in his long career as a manager. Two of these were outstanding performers. He named both of them James Robinson. However, the first one, whose real name was Michael Kelly, was renamed Juan Hernandez in 1840. He stayed with John Robinson through 1845. James Robinson was with the master from 1845 through 1855.

"I received my board, clothes and spending money," Robinson later recalled. "Did I earn my money? You can judge that for yourself," and he recited the same list of acts we referred to above.¹ Having an

eleven-year old boy appear in half the program, one wonders what the audience thought; after all, they paid their quarters, and expected to be entertained by adults, not children. There are references, however, that such use of apprentices was widespread. Juan Hernandez, for one, appeared in seven roles for John Robinson in 1845. A writer in Savannah, Georgia, in 1840, commenting on J. J. Nathans' apprentices (the Pastor brothers), said: . . . "We object to the amount of labor imposed on those two, poor little boys. About one half of the performance, it seemed to us, fell to their share. . . ."²

Apprenticeship was arduous in any profession, and the circus was not excepted. As in all athletic endeavor, circus skills needed to be constantly practiced, and to incorporate youngsters in the program may

James Robinson. Portrait from the *New York Clipper* 13 August 1864. Slout Collection.

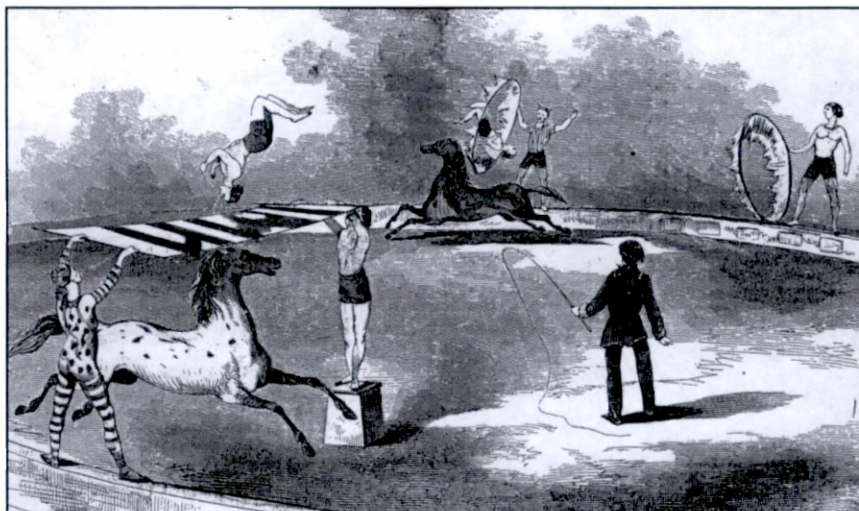


have seemed a method of public exposure that also produced profit.

One of the early appearances James Robinson made was in standing on John Robinson's head while their horse circled the ring. This was the culmination of what was called a "carrying act," and was first introduced in 1845 by two different riders, J. J. Nathans and W. B. Carroll. As with most innovations, this one was widely copied almost immediately, in the nature of athletic competition. James Robinson later remarked that John Robinson held him by the ankles when they presented the feat, whereas when he (James) carried a boy in the same way, later in his career, he didn't use his hands.

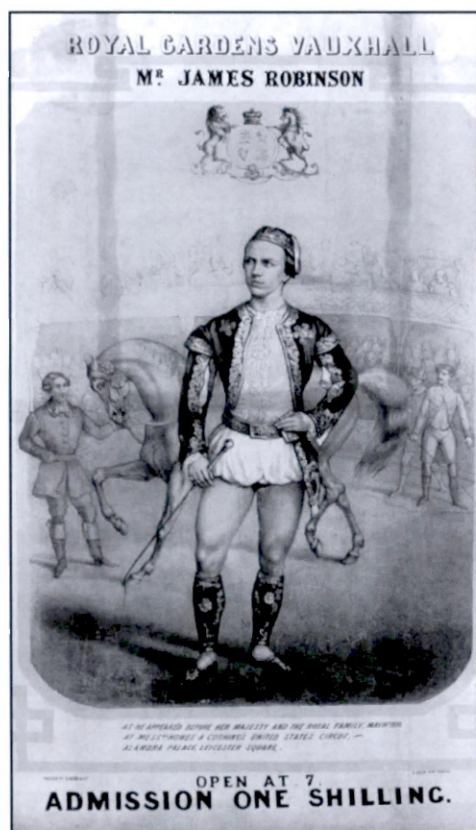
By 1850, at age twelve, James was being advertised by Robinson & Eldred right below John Robinson himself, as ". . . the cynosure of every eye! The admired of all beholders! And who, in all the cities of the South has been crowned with 'Victorious Laurels . . .'. Such verbiage could easily turn a boy's head, but since James couldn't read, he was probably unconscious of it.

We know of his lack of "learning" from the memoirs of a Savannah native, whose aunt ran a boarding house in that city in the 1850's. He wrote: "To my great delight I was told one day that Mr. John Robinson, the proprietor of a celebrated circus, with his wife and son 'Jimmie' had taken rooms in the house for a week or more. Now, 'Jimmie' Robinson was a hero to every boy in Savannah; every high sounding adjective in the dictionary was used to describe him on the bills and posters, and in fact he was one of the finest 'bare-backed' riders that I ever saw . . . but alas! Disillusion comes to us very early in life; the brilliant creature, separated from pink tights, satin



breech-clout and spangles, proved to be a very ordinary boy in everyday attire. Stockily built, coarse features, low language, innocence of grammar were his special peculiarities; they shook my faith in the world, and when in addition I found out that he could neither read nor write, I realized that my idol had "feet of clay" indeed.³

A handbill of Robinson at the Royal Gardens Vauxhall in England. Circus World Museum collection.



James Robinson performing in Spaulding & Rogers Circus. Author's collection.

The author had no way of knowing it, but his description probably fit most of the apprentices then in the circus world, and many of the adults as well. Today's professional athletes would seem to fare no better.

It was in 1851 that James Robinson became the second rider in the world to accomplish a somersault on a bare-backed horse. In so doing he emulated John Glenroy, who had accomplished the feat in 1846. By then, the trick may have lost its luster, for Robinson & Eldred made no mention of it in their advertising. However, they did refer to him as, "everywhere hailed as the best equestrian in the world," and as having, "no equal." And in 1853, Robinson & Eldred offered a match of \$5,000 that "he is the best rider in the world." All this for a boy not quite sixteen years-old.

For a description of his somersaulting, we have to turn to Robinson's own comments in 1884: "I turned somersaults, both forward and backward, over banners four and five

feet wide; banners of that width are not attempted these days. I would stand well back on the horse, at the tail, with my back to his head, and throw a backward somersault. Hard, indeed with the horse moving from you, but I do not remember ever missing one of these.⁴

The reader must understand that Robinson was not riding a large horse, such as a rider of later years would employ. We don't know just when large horses made their appearance in bareback riding, but it was after Robinson and his ilk had retired. A commentator on his career, circa 1900, referred to artists performing with broad-backed draft horses. Robinson used thoroughbred horses, which are notoriously thin, and bred to be so.

It was also in the early 1850's (Gil Robinson says it was 1852), that John Robinson introduced the dirt ring bank, a consequence of having a wagon fail to arrive by show time. Both John Glenroy and James Robinson said they preferred the dirt ring; Robinson was quoted as believing he did his best riding in a dirt ring.

Physically, Robinson was a small man, just five feet-three inches, and 120 pounds. He was flat-footed, and claimed that it allowed him better purchase on a horse's back. His athletic ability cannot be challenged; he jumped and danced on that unsteady platform, leaped garters and hurdles, even jumped from horse to ground and quickly back to the horse. But it was his somersault riding that made him a champion. He did both forward and backward somersaults, some over banners and through hoops.

James Robinson in 1862. Al Conover collection.

In 1856, his apprenticeship ended, and he left



Robinson & Eldred for Spalding & Rogers. This was the season in which the latter managers introduced their nine-car railroad circus, as a second show to their Floating Palace. Perhaps to overcome the onus against the smaller size of railroad troupes, the owners loaded the roster with talent. Besides Robinson, they hired such luminaries as the Lavater Lee troupe of acrobats, Puss Horner, the clown, Madame Olinza, the wire-walker, Ned Kendall's band, and the riders LeJeune Burt and John Davenport.

It was with Spalding & Rogers, according to Robinson, that he turned twenty-three consecutive somersaults, after first doing twenty-two in Pittsburgh. This was a phenomenal undertaking. "The greatest rider that has ever lived," was the way Spalding advertised him.

In 1857, Robinson was with Spalding & Roger's wagon show, and in the fall of the year went to Europe. He was abroad for two years, returning late in the 1859 season. While abroad he worked for several managers, finally appearing with Howes & Cushing's United States Circus. In May, 1858, he rode before Queen Victoria when Howes & Cushing were at the Alhambra Palace in London.

In the winter of 1859, James Nixon journeyed to England, and arranged to hire several of the finest acts then appearing in London. These were to grace his 1860 circus in America. Among them were Omar Kingsley, the Hanlon Brothers, and William Cooke. He also induced James Robinson to join him, and Robinson rode for Nixon & Co. for the first six months of 1860.

In January, at Niblo's the *New York Clipper* reviewed the show, and it is here we find the only negative reaction to Robinson we have discovered. The anonymous *Clipper* correspondent said that Robinson's bareback riding was inferior to that of the Australian James Melville. Since his first appearance in the eastern United States in late 1857, Melville had been the doyenne of the New York press, and deservedly so.

From Nixon's troupe, Robinson went back to John Robinson in mid-1860; joining the Robinson & Lake



James Robinson, c-1876. Howland collection, Circus World Museum.

troupe. He stayed there through the 1861 season. In 1862, a new circus, Thayer & Noyes, made its debut, and had three outstanding riders, Robinson, Eaton Stone and John Glenroy. Possibly because of the war, and the restricted geographic area available to traveling shows, the managers opted for a short, twenty-week season, even though they were well-rewarded financially. Among gains of a popular tour was the purchase of a Fielding band chariot for 1863. They again announced the engagement of James Robinson, "who stands alone and unparalleled for grace, daring, and execution, absolutely throwing forward and backward somersets while his untrammelled horse is running at full speed."

In 1863 Robinson made the big step of becoming a proprietor. He became the partner of Frank J. Howes in what they called the "Champion Circus." Frank Howes (1832-1880), a native of Rochester, New York, had been an agent for several circuses, beginning in 1851. He is probably best-known for bringing Joseph Cushing's hippopotamus to America, the first live one to reach this country, in 1860. But he had worked for Seth B. Howes for four seasons before that event.

The partners constructed a circus building in Chicago on the oft-used

Washington Street lot, across from city hall. Most of their company had been with Thayer & Noyes that summer. "It was about the strongest company that had ever exhibited in the States," according to Glenroy, and deserved the name "Champion." The Chicago stand lasted until 15 April 1864.

Reorganized for the summer tour, Robinson & Howes opened on 18 April in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The entire season was spent on rail cars, one of the earliest such arrangements. It was in 1864 that Robinson took on an apprentice, one Clarence Armstrong, who thereafter performed as Clarence Robinson, ostensibly James' son. It was Master Clarence who rode on James Robinson's head, which we referred to previously. This carrying act was presented on two bare-back horses, and was a very popular part of the program. They performed this feat for eight years, until Clarence grew too big; in 1872 he switched to his own two-horse act.

Robinson sold his share of Robinson & Howes to Horace Norton in November, 1864.

This was the year in which Lewis B. Lent opened the Hippotheatron building on 14th Street in New York City. For his 1865 season, Lent gathered an array of accomplished performers, including the likes of Joe Pentland, Louise Tourniaire, James Madigan, Grizzly Adams' bears, and James and Clarence Robinson.

Of Robinson, Lent said, "(He) will, besides giving his sensational pirouette act, and the terrific hurdles act, called 'Robinson's Ride,' introduce his infant son, Master Clarence, in a series of classic calisthenics." The hurdles act which Robinson presented may have been the beginning of what came to be called "jockey acts." Dressed in the boots and silks and cap of a jockey, and mounted on a bareback horse, Robinson took various poses as his horse cleared a series of hurdles. He stood on one foot, kneeled, was at the tail, at the neck, as the horse went at full speed around the ring. Sometimes he dropped from the animal only to rebound on to its back. The horse had a string of sleigh bells around its neck, and became known, and still is,



Robinson's famous "Jockey Act," as portrayed in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 10 March 1866. Author's collection.

as a "finish horse," in the finale of the act.

Horse racing was a southern specialty until the Civil War, and not much practiced in northern states. But once the Rebellion was quenched, and southern racing was in ruins, northern owners and breeders took over the sport in such places as Saratoga Springs, New York, Monmouth, New Jersey, and St. Louis, Missouri. This was the beginning of the era of such prominent owners as August Belmont, Governor Bowie and Pierre Lorillard, and the fame of their stables, and the jockeys they employed. Robinson's Jockey Act was so popular that it was copied by every bareback rider in the country, and was still performed as late as the 1920's.

The Robinsons remained with Lent in 1866, which was the year in which that worthy put his show on rails. James was at the head of the bill, as usual, and was claimed to have "created the most profound sensation throughout the civilized world . . . no other performer has commanded such munificent compensation . . . received such marks of respect . . . such costly presents . . . as the wearer of the golden diamond belt."

Robinson earned \$50,000 a year in the 1860's, according to one report, which seems about twice what one

would guess. The highest weekly stipend we have found for him is the \$500 James A. Bailey paid him in 1877. He was the highest paid performer in the business year after year. The costly presents referred to were medals and ribbons from the crowned heads of Spain, France, Russia and England before whom he had performed in 1857 and 1858. The golden diamond belt was presented to him by admirers in Cuba.

Napoleon III of France decreed a World's Fair in Paris in 1867, to celebrate the rebuilding of the city by Baron Haussmann. A group of American showmen (Avery Smith, G. C. Quick, J. J. Nathans, G. R. Spalding, and David Bidwell) anted up \$150,000 to send a circus to the affair, and chose James and Clarence Robinson to head the bill. They had a wooden-walled and canvas-topped building made in Albany, which they shipped overseas, but which they were forbidden to use by the authorities. They rented a theatre to good effect, and had full houses for their entire run. Of Robinson, Robert Stickney, one of the three bareback riders with the group (Frank Pastor was the third), and who commanded \$250 per week, said, "I have never seen his equal."

Returning to America for the 1869 season, Robinson signed up with Gardner & Kenyon's circus, which in his honor they titled "James Robinson's Champion Circus Combined with Gardner & Kenyon's Menagerie. He was the star performer as well as the equestrian manager, and had a salary of \$350 per week. His medals and honors were displayed in local jewelry store sat many stands.

"The champion bare-back rider of the world" went into partnership with Abe Henderson and Andrew

Springer in 1870, to frame "James Robinson's Great Circus and Animal Show." They opened in Cincinnati, and made a great circle of Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas before reaching Cincinnati again. Part of the tour was made on the railroads. The season was not a success, and in October they reorganized for a winter tour of the South, but business was still poor, and they closed in November in Tennessee. There were nine shows in the South in 1870, all of which reported dull business.

It was in 1870 that Robinson introduced William E. Gorman (1852-1940), his brother-in-law, to whom he had taught the bounding jockey routine. Robinson had married Laura Gorman at an unknown date. She

NEW YORK CIRCUS,

From Hippodrome Buildings,
Nos. 88, 89, 90, 92 and 94 Fourteenth street,
Opposite Academy of Music, New York.

L. B. LENT.....DIRECTOR,

WILL EXHIBIT ON THE CALENDER LOT,
Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday,
June 19th, 20th and 21st.

This is an
ENTIRELY NEW ESTABLISHMENT,
Upon which an enormous amount of capital has been
lavished with an unsparring hand, to make it what
it claims and is acknowledged by all to be, the
First Exhibition of the Age.

The one that has identified with it
The Champion of the World.

MR. JAMES ROBINSON,
The Bold and Intrepid Horseman, whose wonderful
and startling
BARE BACK RIDING
Has created the most profound sensation throughout
the civilized world. He will at each Entertainment
introduce in a series of CLASSIC LIVING PICTURES, his
infant son,
MASTER CLARENCE,
[Only 5 years of age,] the Youngest, Smallest and
Fettest rider in the world, who largely inherits the
wonderful boldness and extraordinary nerve of his
father.

This ad for Lent's New York Circus listed Robinson. Providence, Rhode Island *Journal*, 20 June, 1868. Pfening Archives.

was not a performer, but Robinson gave her much credit for his success. At one time he said, "she has given me fifty-five years of happiness; fifty-five years of real backing and help."

For 1871, Robinson went into partnership with his fellow-rider Frank Pastor. The company was titled "James Robinson's Champion Show." It was a rail-mounted effort, had two small elephants and eight cages of other animals. Though they advertised that they did not pretend to give a gorgeous street procession, as

most small railers advised, we have found that they did parade in Detroit, and perhaps in other larger venues. Since they had purchased one of the well-known Golden Horse bandwagons from Avery Smith, it seems logical that they would use it in a street display. Fred Dahlinger discovered that the company transported this vehicle in a stock car, rather than on a flat.

An 1871 newspaper ad for the Pastor and Robinson show. Pfening Archives.


As with most railers they covered a good bit of ground, mostly in the mid-west, but going as far east as Washington, D.C. They closed the season in St. Louis on 23 October, where they wintered.

Eugene Robinson, whose real name we don't know, made his debut on the 1872 Robinson and Pastor opus; he took over Clarence's task of standing on Robinson's head for a dozen circles of the ring. Clarence became the two-horse rider on the show.

"The Largest Circus in the World," the advertising trumpeted, but with thirty-four horses it was far from that. Barnum's railer had about eighty; Forepaugh's wagon show claimed 280. Opening in St. Louis, the company visited Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan, before heading east into Ontario, New York and Pennsylvania. They closed the summer season in Philadelphia in October, and took a steamer to Savannah for a winter tour of southern cities. On 23 December they opened for a week at the Academy of Music in New Orleans.

Eighteen seventy-two is a mythical

WILL EXHIBIT IN
FORT SCOTT,
 Saturday, June 4th.



JAMES ROBINSON'S
GREAT
CIRCUS
 AND
ANIMAL SHOW!

With his Splendid Troupe of the
LEADING
Equestrians and Gymnasts
 Of the Day. **THE ONLY**
JAMES ROBINSON,
 The Undisputed
Champion Bare-back Rider
OF THE WORLD!

two months, but which closed with all salaries paid. He re-titled Robinson's circus, "The Great Chicago Show," and appointed Robinson as arena director (equestrian manager). With the big Royal Yedo Japanese troupe of acrobats, and Stokes' female relatives (wife and three daughters), it was a large show for one mounted on the railroad. In June, Stokes resigned, and possibly sold the chattels to G. W. DeHaven and Miles Carpenter, who changed the title back to "James Robinson's Circus." They claimed that they moved on thirty-five cars, and this may have proved too many as the firm folded in Mississippi in November. However, Andrew Haight appeared on the scene, and reinvigorated the corpse, naming it anew, as "The Great Eastern." James and

season, because of the success of Barnum's new railroad show. But for many other managers it was a disaster. There was a late spring, meaning much rain, followed by extreme heat, and it being a presidential election year, it diverted the public's attention from popular amusement. As a result, twenty percent of field shows closed early (ten out of fifty), and only thirty-two were on the road in 1873. Robinson and Pastor's winter tour indicates that they failed to make much money that summer.

They shipped the goods to St. Louis for a two-week stand at the Olympic Theater, and sold the concern. Later events indicated that they were burdened by debt.

The buyer was Spencer Q. Stokes (1819-1888), whose 1872 effort lasted but

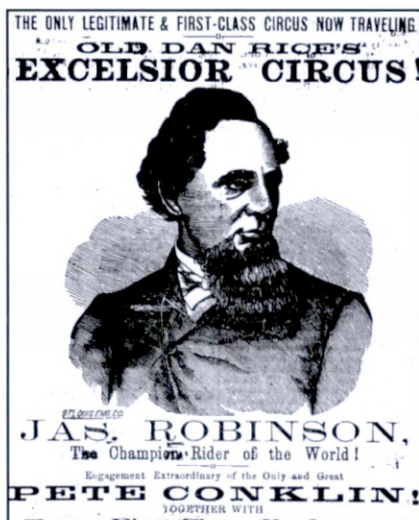
Clarence were prominently advertised, as might be expected. At some stands the ads said, "James Robinson's Great Eastern." They got through the season of 1874, but were brought under the auctioneer's hammer in February, 1875. This probably accounted for much of the Robinson and Pastor equipment of 1871.

A writer for a St. Louis newspaper gave an eloquent tribute to Robinson in 1874: "The poetry of motion was exemplified in his every evolution on horseback. Perilous somersaults that few gymnasts can imitate on the carpet, pirouettes that no other rider can do, the reckless manner in which he carries his little boy, Eugene, the feat of his foot above his head in any position, the startling picture of one foot on the swift-running horse's head the other in the middle of the back, and the furious riding at the close can be executed only by James Robinson. He stands alone, without a rival, unequaled and unapproachable."⁵

Montgomery Queen returned east in early 1875, having wintered in San Francisco. He brought James and Eugene Robinson and "Bud" Gorman with him. They had been in California from January to April working for Jackley and Wilson. Queen had Charles Fish as his premier rider until Robinson arrived. He then advertised a \$10,000 challenge match between the two, which was probably a hoax, but enlivened the attraction of two of the best bareback riders in America appearing in the same program.

Cooper & Bailey hired the Robinsons for the next two seasons. In 1876 the circus was almost entirely rebuilt, in anticipation of a tour of Australia late in the year. After a tour of the mid-west that lasted until mid-August, the firm left Grand Island, Nebraska to cross the mountain states and exhibit for two months in California. On 8 November the show embarked from San Francisco, and after stopping in Honolulu and Fiji, arrived in Sydney on December 7.

James Robinson was advertised by James Bailey as heading the show, and being "the peerless and undisputed challenge champion bareback rider of the world," and whose salary



An 1879 Dan Rice ad featuring Robinson. Pfening Archives.

(\$500 a week plus the expense of the rider's wife, and his horses) was the largest sum ever paid to one artist. Dan Rice supposedly received \$1,000 a week from Forepaugh in 1865, but a clown may not have fit Bailey's conception of an artist. The Australian tour lasted from November, 1876, to March, 1878, with a side trip to the Netherlands East Indies from June to October, 1877.

It was at this time that George Middleton saw Robinson ride, and he later said, "(He was) the greatest rider that the world has ever produced. When he walked into the ring to begin his act, with whip in hand, and jumped on the back of his barebacked horse one was impressed at that minute that he was 'it.' He had that style and grace and finish to his act that no one else ever had that I have seen or heard of.⁶

Mark St. Leon has written that for the run to Java, Bailey cut down the size of the company, taking the side show and a reduced arena contingent, but not the menagerie.⁷ The circus was apparently not as profitable as had been expected, and one of the solutions was to jettison Robinson's high salary. However, when Bailey

suggested this to his star employee that perhaps the heat and hardship of the journey would not be to Robinson's liking, he was informed that even if he pitched his tents in hell, Robinson intended to be there.

As it played out, Robinson, Mrs. Robinson, Pauline Lee and "Bud" Gorman left after a month-long stand in Batavia, and went to Marseilles, France and then to Paris and James W. Myer's American Circus. Cooper & Bailey returned to Australia in early October.

Upon arriving to America for the 1878 summer season, the Robinsons and Gorman made a contract with The Great London Show. Though featuring a very strong cast of performers, the London had an indifferent season, and was bought by Cooper & Bailey, which incorporated it for 1879. Much of the 70's, following the Panic of 1873, were times of poor

This 1878 one sheet Great London Show lithograph pictured James Robinson. Howard Tibbals collection.



business, a condition that lasted until 1879.

It was in 1878 that James Robinson was forced to declare voluntary bankruptcy, because of the debt incurred by his partnership with Frank Pastor in 1871 and 1872. While Pastor, according to the *New York Clipper*, chose to "face the music," Robinson petitioned on 16 May to be acquitted of the consequences. As we reported, the partners sold the circus to Spencer Q. Stokes after the 1872 season. The debts that Robinson acknowledged amounted to \$11,288 and his assets as nominal. When this figure is weighed against his high salary, it is difficult to understand how he could hide in bankruptcy. In fact the *Clipper* commented that his assets were "infinitely below what a great bareback-rider deserves." And since he had plenty of assets when he retired in 1889 we find it hard to believe that he acquired them in the last ten years of his career, which were likely a time of lower income.

In 1879, two Chicago men framed a circus using Stokes' 1873 title, "The Great Chicago." George W. DeHaven, that undertaker of wobbly concerns, was the manager, and Robinson was the equestrian director. These situations where Robinson was both the bareback rider and the equestrian director indicate that managers were filling two positions for one salary, and could mean that Robinson was not the catch he had been. However, he was still considered the champion of his specialty, even in the face of such luminaries as Charles Fish, James Melville, and Robert Stickney.

The firm opened in the eponymous city on 19 May, and within a month was re-titled James Robinson's Circus, and in August was advertised as the Dan Rice Circus. Then it was back to the Robinson title in August, and in October was George W. DeHaven's Circus. All this changing of titles, and the coming and going of such stars as Robinson, Dan Rice and Pete Conklin indicates a lack of custom, and financial instability. James Robinson

left the show in October, but Clarence Robinson remained. W. C. Boyd wrote that Cooper & Bailey purchased the company, and put it out as a winter show on the lower Mississippi.

The Sells Brothers' Circus hired Robinson for 1880 and 1881, and continued the practice of advertising him as the highest-paid man on earth. With his earnings, Robinson joined Patrick Ryan in a one-season effort titled "Ryan & Robinson." Then he went to W. W. Cole for 1883. Cole put the rider's portrait on his advertising car, certainly a mark of his fame.

It was back to Sells for Robinson in 1884, and to their sister-show, S. H. Barrett & Co. in 1885. Robinson was now fifty years old, and surely a step slower than at his peak. C. G. Sturtevant wrote that for the rest of his career he appeared with undistinguished circuses, in which he often took an interest in lieu of salary. If that is true, then we'd mention John B. Doris in 1886; Miller, Stowe & Freeman in 1887; the James Robinson's Circus in 1888; and Grenier Bros. in 1889, his last year in the arena. When Grenier closed in mid season, Robinson switched to W. C. Coup's Equestriaculum.

As with most athletes, Robinson lived a self-contained existence, brought on by having to use their bodies in order to make their living. They must see themselves as the center of the world, otherwise the effort of constant practice of their craft has no meaning. The best ones, whatever the specialty, constantly compare themselves to their rivals; this gives them their impetus to compete. Robinson and Juan Hernandez had a contest in 1857 in Washington, D. C., and Robinson's act was described thusly: "When he entered the ring he displayed a personality of showmanship which indicated supreme confidence... His first routine was straight bareback riding, and he astonished the spectators by his wonderful command of balance, poise and daring. Like a graceful cat he was



Lithograph used by the 1882 Ryan and Robinson show. Circus World Museum collection.

all over the horse's back, on the ground, on again with practically no effort, and finishing with his four complete somersaults in once around the ring, both forwards and backs. Following his work over four and a half foot banners, his pirouettes, and finished with somersaults through balloons..."⁸

Such accolades as this leave us with the impression that he was truly the greatest rider ever to appear in the American circus, perhaps in the world. Since no one living ever saw him ride, and we are dependent upon impressions that we cannot judge well, this may be a misuse of our sources, yet we can think of no one in the modern era that even

James Robinson and son Clarence. Al Conover collection.



approached James Robinson.

When he retired he had a stock farm in Kentucky, and an interest in a Louisville department store that provided him a comfortable living. He had drawn over a million dollars from his art in his forty-four years in the ring.

Reporters sought him out for interviews up until his death in 1917. In an obituary, *Billboard* said he was

generally conceded to have been the greatest bareback rider of all time. He once said that his success was because of his wife, his pipe, his horse and his distance from booze. "I never tasted liquor," he acclaimed, somewhat self-righteously, but an important distinction in his day. C. G. Sturtevant once wrote of him: "He left a record that it is doubtful will ever be equaled. No circus artist has ever held the individual fame, and received the triumphs and ovations over nearly the entire world for such a length of time... It is difficult to imagine anything being done on a horse's back, that was not accomplished by James Robinson."⁹

NOTES:

1. *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, 20 April 1884.
2. *Daily Savannah Republican*, 27 January 1840.
3. Lilla Mills Hawes, ed., "Memoirs of Charles H. Olmstead," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, XLII (December, 1958), p. 406.
4. *The Circus Scrap Book*, April, 1929.
5. Unknown St. Louis newspaper, reprinted Buffalo (NY) *Daily Courier*, 10 July 1874.
6. George Middleton, *Circus Memoirs*, (p.p., Los Angeles, 1913), p. 39.
7. Mark St. Leon, "Cooper, Bailey & Co. Great International Allied Shows. The Australian Tours, 1876 - 78," *Bandwagon*, September-October 1992, p. 17-30.
8. C. G. Sturtevant, "James Robinson-The Equestrian King," *White Tops*, (June, 1931), p. 4.
9. *Ibid.*

Frank A. Robbins

a most successful failure

PART SEVENTEEN

By Robert Sabia

1914--bewitched, bothered, and bewildered. How does one build upon failure? As the new year of 1914 came into being, Frank A. Robbins had to be contemplating his future, both as a circus owner and the head of a small but greatly experienced circus family. Looking back over the season just past, he must have realized that he was fortunate to have completed it in the manner that he did. While the outset of 1913 could only be characterized as a disaster, once his show returned to New York state, it did its normal good business with some ups and downs typical of circusing. However, he was saddled with lingering debt that had to be addressed in some manner. He also had two additional challenges in the immediate future. He required some gelt to winter the circus at the Trenton, New Jersey fair grounds and, of course, a goodly amount to prepare the show for the oncoming spring opening. On a positive note, he was going to be able to invade New England for the first time since

1909. Often this was rewarding territory for him and he had no reason to expect any differently this year despite his long absence. It wasn't going to be easy but, then again, with Frank A. it never was. Although not relevant to Robbins, it was announced in the trade publications in early January, 1914, that Frank A. Jr.'s circus, Lowande & Robbins Indoor Circus, went belly-up at Savannah, Georgia. A paranoid person might think this boom-to-bust syndrome ran in the Robbins' genes. If it did it never appeared on the countenance of Frank A. However, he could only be bewildered by the turn of events that threatened his very viability as a circus owner and probably wondered at times if he, in fact, was bewitched. His circumstances would bother anyone.

As we have been conditioned to

William P. Hall in front of the entrance to his circus farm. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

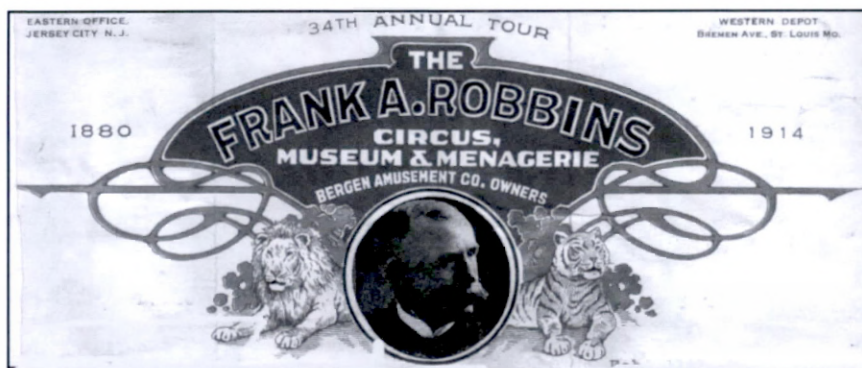
expect, in spite of the circumstances in which he found himself, Frank A. was making the best of things. He was ever active in promoting his acts on the vaudeville circuit. This required him to visit the various booking agencies in New York City showing the prospective employers the various laudatory reviews of the sundry acts set forth in local newspapers. He had a fine product to sell and he was a fine salesman. At this point in time (early 1914) he was marketing three acts (elephants, horses, and an unknown act). These acts represented a vital source of income during these desperate times and provided the basic wherewithal of getting the show back on the road in the spring.

Frank A. was also ever active in supporting William Hall's interests in buying and selling animals. To that end, Robbins wrote him on January 19th about a pending visit with Mr. Hall later that week. Frank A. intended to go to Buffalo for a visit all day Tuesday, January 20th, then



on to Chicago for a couple of days, departing that city on Friday night to arrive at Lancaster, Missouri on Saturday morning, January, 24th. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss various business opportunities and possibly loans to Frank A. for baggage horses for the oncoming season. Apparently Frank A. was attempting to furnish animals to the thriving movie production industry that was centered in Astoria, Long Island (part the Queens Borough of New York City). Much of the outdoor filming took place at or around the Palisades section of Fort Lee, New Jersey. The first important movie feature, "The Great Train Robbery," was shot at that location which is close to the

This 1914 Robbins newspaper ad featured daughter Winona Robbins. Author's collection.



The 1914 Robbins letterhead showing the St. Louis address.


current New Jersey terminus of the George Washington Bridge. It should be noted that both his daughter, Winona, and his erstwhile and disowned son, Frank A. Jr., were successfully pursuing acting careers in filmdom during the off-seasons. In any event, Robbins advised Mr. Hall that leopards were in demand in the motion picture business and camels were experiencing great interest as well. Frank A. was frequently seen in the Broadway area hawking his wares in the company of his good friend, Andrew Downie, who would soon be premiering his new circus, LaTena's. It would not be long before Mr. Downie's circus would be going head-to-head with Frank A.'s aggregation, competing for the local's discretionary entertainment budget. But that was the circus business and this was friendship. A couple of weeks later, Messrs. Robbins and Downie met with John G. Robinson in Cincinnati. The trio collectively later journeyed to Mr. Robinson's farm in nearby Terrace Park, Ohio. Frank A. was on his way to St. Louis and Chicago on business matters and Andrew Downie was enroute to William Hall's quarters to purchase some equipment and animals.

In mid-March Frank A. was still pursuing animals on behalf of William Hall. He advised his Lancaster, Missouri colleague that "... (s)o far, have been unable to buy the bears. I will call on the man this week. We open April 25th. Getting along nicely with everything." This letter was written on Frank A.'s 1914 stationary which was to be expected. What wasn't anticipat-

ed was, in addition to the business address at Jersey City, it also represented a "Western Depot" address on Bremen Ave. in St. Louis. What this "Western Depot" was cannot even be imagined by the writer unless it was merely a mail drop. It is doubted that any of Frank A.'s equipment or animals were resident in that fine city. Frank A.'s statement that everything was progressing in a satisfactory manner was encouraging.

Because he often was very frank in his mailings with William Hall, it is reasonable to assume that the various sources of winter income for Frank A. were going to be sufficient to move his circus from the winter quarters in Trenton to its initial date of the season. However, we should not believe all the financial woes of Robbins had been eliminated. There is good reason to sense that preparation for the 1914 tour did not include substantial repair and painting of the equipment. Most probably, only work that absolutely had to be done was in fact undertaken. Further, the show was reduced once again, this time to its final size of 1 advance, 3 stocks, 5 flats, 3 sleepers. This count meant that a flat was discarded. It follows that several cages were likely eliminated together with a parade wagon or two. Of great significance, some time in 1914 the train and animals were mortgaged to the Erie Lithograph Company to offset unpaid printing bills. This could have been a residual from the prior year. More likely, there was little money in the cash box to pay for lithos at the start of the 1914 season and perhaps the mortgaging of the train, etc., was necessary to start the season with adequate billing materi-

Coming to **FRIDAY**
Newton, MAY 29
THE EMINENT
Frank A. Robbins
AND HIS ALL FEATURE SHOWS.
BIGGER, BRIGHTER, BETTER
THAN EVER BEFORE.
34th — Successful Season — 34th
A MODERN PRESENT-DAY
CIRCUS
GIGANTIC ARENA, MAMMOTH ZOO.
EDUCATIONAL MUSEUM OF
COUNTLESS WONDERS
20 CLOWNS
That will amuse
the most fastidious.
TRICKSTERS
GYMNASTS
MISS WINONA ROBBINS
America's Premier Equestrienne
100 — PERFORMERS — 100
50 — CAGES OF WILD BEASTS — 50
\$20,000 — PRIZE HORSES — \$20,000
ACRES OF WATER-PROOF TENTS
Glorious Free Street Parade
SPECIAL LOW EXCURSIONS
Two Shows Only, at 2 & 8 P. M.
REMEMBER—ROBBINS' NAME MEANS BEST.
One Single Admission Ticket Admits to All.



al for a chance of success.

The initial staff for 1914 was highlighted by a number of familiar names including Frank A., president and manager; Clarence Farrell, treasurer (repeater); Milton Robbins, auditor (repeater); J. J. Brown, adjuster; Joe Condon, assistant adjuster; Mattie Robbins, front door (repeater); R. C. Carlisle, general superintendent; W. C. Cox, lights; William Thompson, superintendent of elephants and animals; Edward Conroy, manager advertising car #1 with 15 men; Louis Tillman, privileges; Henry Kern, bandmaster (repeater); George Burkhart, side show manager (repeater); Winona Robbins, press agent amongst many other functions (repeater); Charles Davis, chief culinary; Blackie Heywood, trainmaster; Harry Demson, privilege car; and Joseph Berris, equestrian director (repeater). There was no mention of a general agent or a railroad contracting agent. Some, if not all of these functions, may have been performed by Frank A. as he was very capable in this regard. The reported staff appears slim and, if so, it was in keeping with the times.

The performance, while strong, was clearly a single ring presentation. It commenced with a grand entry featuring six mounted horses; 2-Clown song by Kenneth Waite; 3-William A. Thompson trained elephants (2) (after a string of successful vaudeville dates in first run houses, this elephant presentation was polished and packed with a delightful series of activities including playing ball, dancing and a variety of difficult acrobatic poses); 4-Clowns led by Will Delevoy, head joey; 5-Kula Yorke and Horace Laird, a very dangerous and imaginative flying and perch act; 6-Another clown number; 7-Charles Fulton's four well-trained

PROGRAM

1914

FRANK A. ROBBINS' ALL FEATURE SHOWS

Musical Director Prof. Kerns and his Military Band.
Equestrian Director, Wm. Demott

This Program Subject to Change

Grand Preliminary Musical Festival one hour of Concert Music prior to every performance

- 1 Grand Introductory Tournament. A picturesque and optically pleasing arenic novelty.
- 2 Clown song by Mr. Waite assisted by part of Company.
- 3 All star Groups of remarkably trained Ponies performed by Mr. Chas. Fulton.
- 4 Clowns sweetheart. A surprise to W. Lambertson, G. Hininger, E. Vanderburg, K. Waite and M. Hininger.
- 5 Aerial Display. Fearless mid-air cleverness—Miss Kula Hininger. Wonderful swinging perch—H. Laird.
- 6 Clowns in Jungle Land.
- 7 Frank A. Robbin's Performing Elephants. Graduates in decidedly new and novel tricks. Performed by Mr. Thompson.
- 8 H. Laird looks in vain for the Mother of the Child. K. Waite balances kitchen implements with ease.
- 9 Equilibristic skill and grace on a threadlike wire. James and Jessie Burns.
- 10 Clown Band lead by G. Vanderburg.
- 11 Peerless Exponents of Horsemanship. Wm. and Eunice Demott.
- 12 Fourth of July among the Clowns.
- 13 Statue Posing Pony in Classic Posing. Spot Beauty.
- 14 Aerial Display. Revolving Ladder a joke on one and other, Laird and Hininger. Black Wire—a visitor to the show, James Burns.
- 15 Frank A. Robbin's six performing stallions late from the Swedish Winter Circus, performed by Wm. DeMott.
- 16 There must be a King Bee among the Honey Bees.
- 17 Mid-air performances of exceptional skill gracefully portrayed. The Aerial Yorks. Their fearless act is simply amazing on the Double Trapeze. M. Hininger, in fearless mid-air Gymnastic cleverness; amazing and diversified muscular discipline.
- 18 Whoa January. A good horse trade. Vanderburg and Lambertson.
- 19 Equine Beauty Ben ridden by Miss Winnie Robbins who displays complete control over her mount.
- 20 Burlesque Menage Act. A fool's conception of the art of horsemanship.
- 21 A spectacular and daring exhibition of unlimited nerve and training. A Dental Study. Miss Yorkie.
- 22 Beautiful display of equestrian. The very quintessence of the art of riding. The DeMotts.
- 23 G. Vanderburg and his evil eyed diminutive mule Maud in a side splitting Burlesque Riding act.

Remain for the Wild West Show and become acquainted with the true life of the West

Program listing the acts at the start of the season. Howard Tibbals collection.

and handsome ponies; 8-Yet another clown number featuring Jaro; 9-James and Jessie Burns with a stimulating wire act; 10-Snake clown number; 11-Statue pony presented by Miss Lambertson; 12-First concert announcement; 13-The DeMotts were back with their magnificent hurdle act to much applause; 14-The amazing clowns return; 15-Revolving ladder act with Horace and Monroe dressed in clown garb with amusing stunts; 16-Joseph Berris presenting the first-class six black horse act honed to perfection by their continuous circus and vaudeville tours; 17-Could it be another clown act? It

was.; 18-Double and single traps presented by the Aerial Yorkes; 19-The star of the program--none other than Winona Robbins, menage upon her beautiful horse, Ben; 20-A burlesque menage act; 21-Mule hurdle act by George Vandermer in a very funny routine; 22-Head balancing by Charbino and Costello; 23-Clown band; 24-Carrying act presented by Billy and Eunice De Mott that was very cleverly arranged; and 25-A very strong finale with Kula Yorke in an iron jaw butlerfly.

As is apparent, there were a number of first rate acts offered. It may be that there was an overabundance of clowning, probably because clowns were the least expensive performers. However, it may be that the clowns were particularly funny (not always the case) and added to the enjoyment of the program rather than only contribute only to its length. We do note that a number of the fine performers were repeaters including Kula Yorke, the DeMotts, George Vandermer and Joseph Berris. This indi-

cates that these performers were likely paid in full during the prior year and had reasonable expectations of being similarly treated during 1914. The makeup of the concert was not delineated.

Complementing the big show, the side show was notable in content. George Burkhart put together a strong line up including the Georgia Minstrels; Captain Jack Kuhn, tattooed man; Kathleen Powers, mind-reading and illusions; Mr. Richard Powers, magician; Mr. Spencer, Punch and Judy; Mne. Ada, snake enchantress; Bulyanan the midget; Madam Tuney, sword swallower; Millie Delno, palmist; George Serfert, 8 lions; and the ever popular Oriental dancers, Clara Sampson

and La Belle Ada. There were two other minor side shows on the midway, viz.: Uno, the strange girl, snake eater; and Congo, the half-man and half-ape person.

The season opened on Saturday, April 25th in Bordentown, New Jersey, a few miles south of the Trenton winter quarters. Business was fair in chilly weather. A short run south of about fifteen miles took the troupe to Burlington (4/27) with similar results. Salem (4/27) was a bit better both in weather and business as the show reached deep into southern New Jersey. Glass-

boro and Millville continued the exploration of the hinterland with fair results. Finally, a turn to the north turned in good results. Mount Holly (5/1) had near full houses as cold weather continued but the audience still enjoyed the performance very much. Lakewood concluded the first full week, once again plagued with poor weather and only fair business.

Weather improved significantly the next week with Plainfield (5/3) leading the way. There, another society circus day similar to the prior year's Spring Lake trial society circus, was scheduled with success. The whole routine of the son of New Jersey's former Governor Leslie Fort sponsoring the Tuberculosis Fresh Air School, participation of the leading citizens of Plainfield, participation of several locals in the actual performance, and the construction of \$1.00 per seat, special boxes for the performances, all guaranteed a big day for both the circus and the Tuberculosis School. During the morning parade, a number of the local youths were found in the march, dressed in clown garb. Over \$800 was raised for the good cause which more than satisfied the goals of the sponsors. All-in-all, a much needed and appreciated very good day, particularly when one considers that Barnum & Bailey was not even



Kenneth Waite, a clown on the 1914 Robbins show.

locals responded to the larger circus. Similar ads were placed in the newspapers at Flemington (5/7) where Frank A. followed LaTena by almost two weeks and Tompkins Wild West and Circus by ten days.

With such immediate competition, business was negatively affected at all three shows although LaTena did draw almost a full house at night in light rain. Crossing the Delaware into Pennsylvania with a fairly long midweek run 70 miles, the show was delayed until 8 a. m. before reaching South Bethlehem (5/8). To further impair the unloading, a waiver from the Health Officials was required because of a measles quarantine which was scheduled to be lifted the next day. By the time the waiver was secured, it was too late for the parade. The erection of the various tops was accomplished with great haste and the starting time of the big show was only a couple of minutes late. A good business day was registered making the hustle and bustle well worthwhile at the box office. Closing the week at nearby

two weeks behind. Then it was only several miles to the east for the next stand at Westfield. In advertising for this date, Frank A.'s ads contained obvious reference to his friend, Andrew Downie's new circus, LaTena, which preceded our hero into this town amongst others. Under the banner, "DON'T BE DECEIVED," Frank A. advised the locals that "We do not advertise two trains and come into town with nine cars." The

Quakertown, resulted in much mud but two good houses. The very soggy conditions greatly affected the ability of the horses, ponies and elephants to do their thing with their normal consummate skills. Nevertheless, the audiences fully understood the handicaps that the animals were performing under and widely applauded their efforts.

The Bucks County seat of Doylestown (5/11) provided another good day with very generous remarks being found in the local papers regarding the quality of the program. The elephants, six black stallions and the acrobatic head slide from the top of the tent garnered special attention from the press. Continuing westerly deeper into the Quaker State, the relatively large town of Lebanon (5/13) was played. This location happens to be midway between Harrisburg and Reading where Ringling Bros. was scheduled one and two days later, respectively. Much Ringling paper was about but pretty good business was experienced. Robbins followed Wyoming Bill's Wild West by about ten days. This latter aggregation enjoyed very good business but suffered poor reviews regarding its offerings. Frank A. gradually worked north departing the Amish farming areas and headed into the coal country of central Pennsylvania. Tower City (5/15) was good with both the schools and the shirt factory closing because of the circus day holiday. The next

Horace Laird, a clown on the 1914 Robbins show.



day was Saturday and the business at Minersville benefited from many folks from nearby villages coming into town to view the happenings. Mount Carmel (5/20) saw just so-so business. At the next stand, Bloomsburg, four employees were treated for injuries sustained when a big pole fell on them during the late night teardown at Mount Carmel. One of the unfortunate quartet was admitted to the hospital and was expected to stay

there for several days recovering from the incident. Business continued fair at the larger towns of Berwick (5/22) and Hazelton (5/23). It is interesting to note that while his circus was deep in Pennsylvania (5/18), Frank A. spent at least some of that day in Easton, Pennsylvania, some 75 miles to the east. There he watched Ringling and the 101 Ranch shows day and date. He commented to the *Billboard* that one parade followed the other which he described as a very impressive sight. And what was Frank A. doing away from his circus? It is conjectured that he was acting as the contracting agent in advance of his circus and was booking a couple of future dates in New Jersey. Economies in every practical way had to be implemented. Leaving his circus in the capable hands of Mattie, Winona and Milton wasn't too risky at that.

Turning east, the new week opened at Freeland (5/25), a small village only ten or so miles from Hazelton. Business was better than expected from such a tiny burg, perhaps stimulated by the large crowds watching the Sunday unloading and setup. It was noted that two local (Freeland) musicians joined the Robbins' band a week later at Ossinger, New York. Leighton (5/26) was just OK. The local paper thought that Winnie Robbins was the best act of a good show. It really took crossing the Delaware River and reaching Hackettstown, New Jersey (5/27) before business was restored to an acceptable level. Stroudsburg turned in its normal big houses at both the afternoon and night performances. The front page of *The Morning Press* reveled in reporting that the quality of the program measured up to expectations with plenty of wonderful features. For its part, *The Daily Record* identified some of the acts that were outstanding including the expected black Belgium stallions, and the Robbins elephants and not often mentioned Charles Fulton and his statue pony and the Aerial Yorkes. Newton's (5/29) take was good but a bit below that of Stroudsburg. However, the afternoons were equal in enthusiasm. This time the *Herald* not only mentioned the "best ever" elephants but had the highest complements regard-

Andrew Downie's LaTena circus provided opposition for Robbins in 1914.

ing Winona who was described as "a pretty faced lass, with a most winning smile, who honors the position of press agent. Her father gave her a part in the performance, and the grace with which she rode the big black horse and made it do surprising stunts, won for her rounds of applause both by the afternoon and evening audiences." Brother Milton also got his share of kudos by the newspaper. It will be recalled that Milton attended Newton Academy while a teenager. In recognition of his continued affection for this school, Milton invited the school body, the faculty and the dining room corps to the afternoon performance as his guests. Needless to say, his largess was greatly appreciated. In fact, the only negative to this fine

day was Miss Eunice DeMott being violently thrown to the ground when her beautiful white horse stumbled and fell during the afternoon performance. She was immediately taken to the hospital where it was quickly determined that no broken bones were sustained and the bruises were the full manifestation of the injuries to her. She was back at it for the night show as was her noble steed. The week concluded with another good day at Morristown. Noteworthy was the use of a pictorial representation of "Miss Winnie Robbins--America's Premiere EQUESTRIENNE" in the local newspaper ad. She had truly become a star of the circus.

LaTena also visited the county seat of Morris County on May 1st but this date was remote enough not to affect the good business that Frank A. did at that town. For the record, LaTena's train was painted bright red. It was primarily an animal show with 31 acts in 2 rings and an arena.

In the May 30th issue of *Billboard*, under the title "SOME WEATHER," there was an editorial comment about the severity of weather experienced in eastern United States. It stated "The first eighteen days of May, 1914, will go down in circus history as the coldest and worst ever. On the 19th it warmed up a bit. On the 21st straw hats burst forth above the Mason and Dixon's line and the long trying siege was over. Talk about your baptism of fire. This season fared worst. It was circumsised with the knife of the icy North.

"And yet many shows got good business and some few big. For instance, Frank A. Robbins writes that he had no bad business at all and adds, 'I saw the Barnum & Bailey Shows at Newark, Monday night, (May 18th) and they had the biggest crowd I ever saw under a canvas. The big top had eight poles, there were 3,100 chairs, 1,360 reserves and seemingly a mile of 17-tier blues with 8-tier reds in front of them, and all filled to overflowing."

It seems that Barnum & Bailey had its share of big days but notwithstanding Frank A.'s remarks that he had no bad days of business, he prob-

ably did not have the expected number of good ones either.

It was across the Hudson River for a trek north along the east bank of that great flow of water. The first stop was Ossinger, (known to the unsavory element as Sing Sing) New York (6/1) about 25 miles north of Manhattan. When the boys from New York City went "up the river," it wasn't to visit West Point or Albany, and it was never for a day's stay. In any event, Frank A. visited there for but a day. The show arrived on Sunday in sufficient time to erect the tents at night. It had a large house at night after a small audience in the afternoon. Once again the performance was much enjoyed with elephants, Charles Fulton's statue ponies, and clowning garnering special mention. Peekskill was next with a fair day business. Another 20 miles north brought the show to Beacon. Good houses were had and the performance was considered to be exceptional for a small circus. The only negative mention was the parade which was viewed by only a few people who were disappointed with its content.

The downsizing of Frank A's show was seen by the locals primarily in the quality of the parade and the menagerie. The performance did not seem to be affected although it was concentrated in a single ring rather displayed in two or three rings. Continuing along the Hudson, the city of Poughkeepsie turned in poor business in heavy rain. However, the circus was considered to be excellent. How better to complete its tour up the Hudson than to visit Hudson (6/5). There good business greeted the show. Earlier that day, a very large crowd watched the unloading in the rail yards. Many folks from surrounding villages including some coming across the Hudson on the ferry took in the afternoon performance. Turning to the northeast and leaving the Hudson River behind, our hero concluded this brief New York tour at Chatham (6/6). Saturday brought many farmers from



The ladies band in a 1914 Barnum & Bailey parade.

the whole county resulting in excellent business both in the afternoon and the evening. The elephant act was considered to be worth the price of admission by itself. Most of the features were individually mentioned. Of particular interest was the specific description afforded the act of Charbino and Costello. The paper reported that "(a) sensational act was the sliding down a wire from a height of 30 feet over a distance of 50 feet by a performer who made the dash standing on his head. One end of the wire was attached to a pole and the other end was held by a woman. When the man arrived at the end of the wire he executed a complete somersault in the air, landing on his feet on the back of the woman." Little wonder that the audience was so

A Frank A. Robbins 1914 route card.

1880-1914 34th Annual Tour The FRANK A. ROBBINS All Feature Show

Official Route No. 8

June 15	. . .	Quincy, Mass.
June 16	. . .	Plymouth, Mass.
June 17	. . .	Wareham, Mass.
June 18	. . .	Hyannis, Mass.
June 19	. . .	Falmouth, Mass.
June 20	. . .	Middleboro, Mass.
SUNDAY.		
June 22	. . .	Newport, R. I.
June 23	. . .	Bristol, R. I.
June 24	. . .	E. Greenwich, R. I.
June 25	. . .	New London, Conn.
June 26	. . .	Madison, Conn.
June 27	. . .	Portchester, N. Y.

enthusiastic about the performance.

Frank A. then invaded Massachusetts for his first New England foray after a five year absence. Given this extended absence, it is surprising that the entire visit to New England lasted less than three weeks. Nothing like

starting off with a bang. Westfield (6/8) was the first stand. The home of the famous Columbia Bicycles is only a short trolley trip to the large city of Springfield. Why is that important? It happens that Barnum & Bailey was showing in Springfield that same day, creating in essence a "day and date" for both circuses. It does not require a vivid imagination to determine which circus suffered most. Continuing east for 50 miles, the next stand was Spencer, about 13 miles of Worcester. At least Barnum & Bailey wasn't arriving at that fair city for a couple of weeks. Business in Spencer so reflected this fact. Andrew Downie's LaTena's Circus scheduled Milford on June 1st which was 12 days ahead of Frank A. on the same lot. The town was three years fresh and Downie enjoyed that circumstance somewhat more than our hero. Barnum & Bailey booked Boston for the entire week commencing June 15th. Ever valiant, Frank A. booked Dedham (6/13) and Canton (6/15) in the shadow of Bunker Hill. He did no better than the British.

Turning south, Frank A. finally put some distance between his circus and that of his much larger adversary. Taunton (6/16) was a large enough town to support his show despite the fact it was some 20 miles from New Bedford and Fall River which enjoyed visits from Barnum & Bailey a few days earlier. Preceding the Kennedy clan by a few years, Hyannis on Cape Cod turned in good business which was repeated at Falmouth (6/18). The relatively short Massachusetts tour concluded at Middleboro the next day. No great fortune was made in the Bay State. In fact if it was break-even, that would be saying something.

The next week started with a good stand at the summer home of the Four Hundred, Newport, Rhode Island (6/22). It was pleasant by the seashore, made particularly so by the absence of Barnum & Bailey lithographs lining the parade route. Central Falls is a few miles northeast of Providence and well within that large city's trolley system. The Greatest Show on Earth filled the tent in Providence less than two weeks before. Frank A. did not. East Greenwich (6/24) was just OK and New London, Connecticut (6/25) was a surprisingly rewarding considering the fact that Frank A. was the third show in with Wheeler Bros. and LaTena a few weeks ahead. The always good Port Chester, New York (6/27) reintroduced the show to the Empire State for a month's stay. It was nice to be away from the awesome and often devastating competition of Barnum & Bailey.

The opening gambit was two weeks on the "Island." The sojourn commenced at Port Washington (6/28) which is located on the North Shore only a few miles east of the border of Queens (New York City). On the same day a Duke who was not well known in the United States was assassinated in Serbia. Not a significant news item. Back on Long Island, as usual, the circus travelled generally easterly along the North Shore for the first week and returned along the South Shore the following week. Business on the Island was all right but clearly not as rewarding as in past years. The losses of Massachusetts were not recovered as hoped for. The downer in business could have been a direct result that this route was duplicative in nine of the twelve stands played, all in less than a year. Perhaps an example of "Too much-Too soon." The weather was hot as expected for midsummer and the swimming was enjoyed by all who partook. However, this was not travelogue but a business and business was not good enough to cover the sorry state of the show's finances at the start of the season. Trouble was brewing in the ticket office. At



The Robbins liberty act in the back yard.

Hempstead (6/29), an elderly woman watching the street parade dropped dead, apparently from the excitement of the event. Given the small size of the offerings, she must have been particularly vulnerable to heart seizure.

July found the show at Glen Cove which was followed by the only new date of the week, Hicksville (7/2). Fair business prevailed. The nation's birthday was celebrated at Huntington. The ticket wagon also celebrated in kind. The second week commenced at Riverhead (7/6). Then it was on to Greenport, near the tip of the northern fork. Additional repeat dates at Sag Harbor, Southampton, and Patchogue (7/10) followed. The Long Island tour was completed at the South Shore village of Bay Shore (7/11), the only new date of this week. After the tear-down, the circus had a long haul ahead over Sunday, crossing the East River, the Harlem River and Hudson River in the process. Meanwhile in Europe, telegrams and messages were being exchanged between the sundry capitals, some bellicose with the result, armies started to seriously mobilize. America watched with rising interest and the front pages of newspapers frequently were headlined with the most recent actions of the potential belligerents.

Once again, Frank A. choose to route a village less than one year from its prior date. This time it was Ellenville, New York (7/13) with not so hot results. Why this unimaginative routing? Could it be the rationale was that a second date in less than a year would produce equal or better grosses? May be so but doubt-

ful. I believe it could be argued that there was a much more practical reason. When the bill car was at New London doing its thing on or about June 11th, Frank A. visited. Why would the owner take time out from all of his responsibilities on the show lot to visit the bill car, a trip of almost 100 miles each way from the June 11th show date at Natick, Massachusetts? If the advance crew was doing its job (and there is no reason to suspect that it wasn't), what would be the purpose? Frank A. would know daily if the paper placed was satisfactory by looking about the town played that day. If there was some shortfall, it could be corrected by a telegram to the car manager, Ed Conroy. He had a competent bill crew. But what if Frank A. wasn't in Natick but actually heading toward that town and New London was on the way, which it is if one is heading east from the New York area.

The practical answer to this question is that Frank A. had been away from the show for several days. What was he doing? He was booking dates on Long Island acting as the contracting agent. Because of the general success experienced there the previous year after an absence of four years, he was reacquainted with a number of fundamentally sound towns and villages. He booked the same ones in 1914 as a matter of convenience. He did not have the luxury of spending a day in each town as would a normal contracting agent. He probably booked the entire two weeks in three or four days. He possibly decided to book Ellenville for the same reason. He knew exactly how to route the complicated rail transit out of Long Island to Ellenville because he just did it not more than eleven months before. He must have been well aware of the chances he was taking with these repeat bookings but decided that the time constraints upon him made it mandatory. When you try to manage a circus without sufficient help, this was the result. Financial woes show up in strange and unex-

pected ways. In any event, proceeding on the tour, Fallsburgh (7/14) was somewhat better than Ellenville and Livingston Manor (7/15) was very good. At the latter stand, the performance was considered good "... but the general equipment was very shabby and an entire new equipment would improve the production 100 percent." Here, once again, we see the results of a lack of money during the winter quarters rehab period. Only such items that required immediate attention were addressed and non-essential painting probably wasn't done at all. In mid-season, the show had a decidedly "end-of-the-season" look. Not a good sign. At Sidney (7/17) attendance was only fair in the afternoon and virtually nil in heavy rain during the evening. No gambling was reported. Worchester closed the week with a Saturday date given to fairly good crowds.

Two items of concern appeared in the trade publications about this time. The first was in the July 11th edition of the *Billboard*. Henry Kern was seeking cornets, a clarinet, trombones and an alto. This was a good half of the band population. Now this could have been a result of a dispute with Mr. Kern. It is equally likely that there was anticipation of the show running into deep financial problems and they abandoned ship before the ship abandoned them. In what is clearly a significant turnover, there was a new sideshow manager, an assistant manager and a whole cadre of new features in the side show. W. Robinson was the new man-in-charge and with him came essentially a new crew of helpers. The side show line up now consisted of Professor Anderson and his Dixie Minstrels (new); Princess Olga, dancing Girl of all Nations (new); the Bulgarian Midget, said to be the smallest commanding officer in the world; Cannibal Midget, standing but 29 inches in height and weighing 54 pounds (new); magic by Professor Dick (new); LaBelle Ada, snake enchantress, who had a collection of reptiles worthy of special mention; Millie Darcy, mind-reading (new);



This 1914 Robbins songster was published by the Harold Rossiter Music Co. The same cover design was also used on other shows. Howard Tibbals collection.

Millie Delno, Egyptian palmist; Punch and Judy (new); Madam Trincy, sword-walking (new); and LaBell Ada and LaBelle Clara, Oriental dancing (not new but ever exciting). Mr. Robinson was the fourth side show manager in two years. As the success of the side show is dependent mostly on the draw of the big top, this turnover is very disturbing and a possible indicator of poor business.

It was a long weekend haul to the Monday date at Gloversville (7/20) and it was hardly worth the effort expended. Only a slim crowd was in the seats for the afternoon session and although better at night, no profits were counted in the ticket wagon when loading for the next date at Northville. The lack of attending folks was most probably influenced by the big 101 Ranch Show scheduled for its Gloversville date several days later (7/25). Fonda (7/23) on the Mohawk River did little to replenish the coffers but it was Little Falls (7/24) that provided the clincher regarding the sorry state of financial affairs in which the show rested. A short squib said it all. "A writ of attachment was taken out against

the Frank A. Robbins circus while it was in the city last week and four horses were seized upon and are detained at the Towe livery barns. The 101 Wild West Show claims the Robbins combination is indebted to it in the sum of \$600; hence the attachment. The horses will be sold by the sheriff unless settlement is made." Nothing more was found relative to the final disposition of this writ. However, the borrowing from a rival show is unusual, particularly if it was a borrowing in cash. It need not be. Perhaps Frank A. purchased four baggage horses from his old friend and partner, Edward Arlington, with payment due some time in the future. That payment was not paid on time nor within any extension offered by Mr. Arlington and therefore the writ of attachment. Business was business and Mr. Arlington had to account to the Miller Brothers for his actions. It must have embarrassed Frank A. enormously to welsh on his obligation to a friend but it clearly happened. It was the first time that this writer is aware of this type of circumstance in the long history of the Robbins Circuses.

July 27th found the show in the large town of Auburn, at the northern tip of the finger lake of Owasco. Business was only fair with a small house in the noonday sun and a much better one at night. The extensive review merits some focus, particularly given the poor financial condition of the show. The performance was very credible overall with Hillary Long (yep he came back after his lengthy tour of Australia) leading the deserved accolades. The elephants, liberty horses and Kula Yorkes with her iron jaw butterfly routine garnered special mention. Clowning was considered excellent and it goes without saying that Winona Robbins was considered both an excellent performer and an astute press agent. The paper noted that during winter, darling Winnie was a motion picture actress. It was reported that Professor Kern's band included three lady soloists, one of whom

played a tuba and the other two melophones. We will recall that two of these ladies were related to Mr. Kern, his wife and his daughter, who later became Mrs. Milton Robbins.

The paper also observed that "(t)he show was well 'set up,' canvas, performers' paraphernalia and costumes being clean and bright and the whole circus had a prosperous look. The main tent interior had a strange look because of the absence of a wide track, there being no hippodrome features that commonly close a circus exhibit. As usual at a circus the side show attracts the throng on the grounds and the 'annex and museum exhibit' with the Robbins show was well patronized and was a typical side show. The menagerie was a small one but housed some interesting animals; there were camels, elephants, lions and bears and the indispensable cage of monkeys."

The lengthy article closed with a very unexpected bit of no-news. "Frank A. Robbins, the owner of the show, denied the report that his show was to buy the Sig Sautelle which recently exhibited here (Auburn). 'We have a large enough show,' Mr. Robbins said, 'and we have had a good year despite adverse conditions. We have had but two losing weeks. We have no intention of expanding.'" Clearly an understatement if there ever was one. For completeness of information, Sig Sautelle was in fact sold to a Louis D. Thilman on or about August 1st. But poor business continued to plague the circus and finally U.S. Litho (Erie Division) delivered the coup de grace on October 2nd, closing it and delivering the show to William Hall for appropriate disposition.

It was a fairly long midweek run to Penn Yan (7/28), at the apex of the north-eastern fork of Lake Keuka. Penn Yan will be remembered by some as the winter quarters of the James M. Cole Circus of the 1940's. At Penn Yan a revamped newspaper advertising copy was introduced. As would be expected, it featured Hilary

LARGEST OF ALL. ONLY ONE COMING.

COLUMBUS, Aug. 12

WEDNESDAY

FIFTH AVE. SHOW GROUNDS.

101 RANCH REAL WILD WEST SHOW



550 REAL ROUGH RIDERS and HORSES 550

REPRESENTING THE FOLLOWING FEATURES

INDIANS The Real Red Man of the plains in war-paint.

COWBOYS Brought Direct from 101 Ranch and the Real West

COSSACKS Reckless Riders from Far-off Russian Steppes.

MEXICANS Real Rough Riders from the Land of the Rio-Grande

STEER THROWING Jumping from Back of Galloping Horse to Steer's Horns, then wrestling combat

Contest Between Mounted Indians Against Cowboys and Cowgirls

Bucking Horse Champions Actual Winners of Wyoming and Oklahoma Bucking Horse Contest

2 PERFORMANCES DAILY 2 & 8 P.M. RAIN OR SHINE

CHAMPIONS Bucking Horse, Roping, Shooting

WILD-WEST GIRLS Dashing Queens of the Saddle

VACQUEROS Real Types of the Mexican Cowboy

RURALIES Genuine Mounted Police

Football on Horseback

BIG STREET PARADE 10 A.M. SHOW DAY

The Miller and Arlington 101 Ranch also crossed Robbins' path in 1914.

Long. However it also introduced several new names and presumably acts that were being featured at that time. They included The Flying Potters, the Rose Millar Troupe, the Four Adairs, The Royal Japanese Troupe, and The Clarksonians. No mention of these additions was found in the trade publications. How this obvious increase in payroll was reconciled with the desperate financial condition of the show cannot even be imagined. For the next day's stand at nearby Dundee, the copy was revised in a significant manner. Given the very large size of the ad, there must have been some significant circus competition lurking in the immediate area although a search did not reveal any. Of course Mr. Long was highlighted. But now the Rose Millar Troupe became the Rose Miles Lily Troupe; The Royal Japanese Troupe became The Royal Japanese Family, and a Smith Family was identified. It should be noted that The Clarksonians were not The Clarksonians. This Clark group were bicycle riders. It is not clear how the presence of Hilary Long and

his head balancing act affected the presentation of the very skilled and daring Charbino and Costello head slides. Presumably this latter act was still on the program. It is always nice to know who you are dealing with. Sometimes with Frank A. it was difficult, made even more so with a squib in the August 1st *New York Clipper* which commented about the addition of Hilary Long. But it did more than just that. It also revealed that the Savoy, Varro, Sack Trio, formerly of Barnum & Bailey, joined Robbins while it was on Long Island. (There was a Savoy act on the 1913 Barnum & Bailey which presented dogs. This may or may not be the same folks.) In any event, with Dundee, the long and often troublesome New York tour was completed.

Elkland (7/30), only a single mile south of the New York border, paved the way into Pennsylvania and hopefully prosperity. With Frank A. apparently subscribing to the Keynesian theory of economics that you spend your way out of a depression, the payroll appeared to be greatly enlarged. Without a decided upswing in business, there would be a serious question if the season could be completed. The initial stand was not memorable. Wellsboro was next and there was a fair take at Tioga County seat of government. It was somewhat better at Lock Haven (8/1) where a late arrival was caused by a round-about 90 mile run. There was a large crowd that welcomed the show in the freight yards to watch the unloading process. More important, this large crowd went to see the circus as both afternoon and night performances enjoyed good houses. The parade and the program were considered very good with Winona considered to be the star. Of interest to us Robbins-philis, one of the local newspapers commented that the show was on nine cars. Was this possible? May be! Some cutting back certainly was a possibility given the financial challenges being experienced. If this was a reality, it wasn't something that would make the trade publica-

tions. It should be noted that following fast behind Mr. Robbins was the Robinson Famous Circus due in Lock Haven in about a month. Lots of opposition paper was posted and there was a fair amount of newspaper ads for this larger Mugivan and Bowers owned circus.

Things in Europe were now alarming with troops clearly on the move. The time for talk was about over and the time for action had begun. Early in August, the German army invaded Belgium and the race for the sea was on. United States immediately declared its neutrality. It was just another European conflict, seen so frequently in the past. The pundits predicted that the matter would be settled by year's end but in all probability, some monarchies would fall. Regarding the circus business, it was clear that fewer animals would be available because much of that trade was controlled by the warring countries. In addition, the vast resource of circus acts from Europe would become nonexistent for the duration. Other than those concerns, American circus owners did not evince any significant apprehensions about the future.

A Sunday run took Frank A.'s extravaganza to Bellefonte (8/3), only a few miles from the presently huge Penn State campus. It was only a small college in 1914. With too much time on their hands, two of the circus employees were required to accept the accommodations at the local jail because of their disposition to "start something" on Monday evening. Quickly incarcerated, one of the exuberant vagrants decided it was in his interest to attack his cell. Despite his vigor, he found that steel did not bend as easily as his arms. After cursing U. S. Steel he eventually calmed down. Both circusmen were released the next day. It was not reported if the circus welcomed the culprits back down the road. A 17 year old runaway from Lock Haven was forced to go home when his father came to Bellefonte and with the help of the local constable, convinced him there was no future for him traveling about with Frank A. Continuing in a southerly direction, the towns of Tyrone and Bedford (8/5) were played with the latter enclave experiencing good reviews and pretty good business. Of partic-

POKEEPSIE THURSDAY, JUNE 4.
34th — Annual Tour — 34th
FRANK A.

ROBBIN'S


ALL FEATURE SHOWS

Direct From Its Eastern Triumph.
BIG MODERN UP-TO-DATE

CIRCUS

Of Present Day Magnitude.
A COLLOSSAL
HIPPODROME

Of International Acts, Supreme
 Sensations of Glittering Splendor
 and Wholesome Amusement.



MENAGERIE.

50 Cages of Wild Beasts.
 Performing Elephants.
 Tigers, Lions, Panthers, Bears,
 Monkeys and Jungle Kings.

MUSEUM

Of World's Wonderland that will
 surprise and delight young and old.

PARADE.

FREE On the Main Streets.
TWO PERFORMANCES DAILY
2 P. M., 8 P. M.

Another newspaper ad used by Robbins in 1914.

ular notice was the excellent shape of the baggage horses. In the advance press releases the towners were advised that the Rose Lily Troupe were aerialists. So with the Flying Glendales, The Burns wire act, Charbinos and (de) Costello slide for life and the ubiquitous Hilary Long bouncing about on his head, there was plenty going on in the air. On

the following day at Everett, our old friend, Joe Hughes, joined with his colleague, William Cavanaugh, as legal adjusters. Both closed with the faltering Sig Sautelle Circus on August 5th at Painted Post, New York. It will be recalled that both gentlemen left the Robbins aggregation about two years earlier to get into the airplane craze that was sweeping the Country. It can be reasonably assumed that project just didn't off the ground. After Everett, the tour headed northeast toward the general area of Harrisburg.

At Saxton on August 7th, Frank A. scribed a most important letter to his long-time partner on many initiatives, William Hall, summarizing their transactions over the past year and adding a caveat of note. He wrote: "Enclosed is (a) statement which I think is correct. I sent you a-

Kangaroo, worth	\$125.00
Pair of Black Bluck worth	175.00
A sloth Bear	85.00
An Aoudad worth	100.00
A cross between an axis deer and a hog deer worth	<u>100.00</u>
	\$585.00

"To wind up last years transaction. I paid on account of the animals.

A leopard a big male that they wanted for a breeder \$230,00 \$230.00

I paid cash for birds and monkeys \$54.00

Cash for R. R. fare 9.00

Credited Downie for Yak \$60.00

\$353.00
 Rec'd on acct. by sight draft \$100.00
\$253.00 due me

"There is still due me two hundred and fifty three dollars (\$253.00) and anything you may see for to allow me for buying. There will not be any animals come in from any country this winter. I thought I would go quietly any place there is any and ship to you but if my judgment is not good there would not be any use. I was delighted at all of the purchases. The yak was the cheapest of all. *If I did not need the money and need it bad I would ask for it.* (emphasis added).

"Sincerely yours,

"Original deal

20 horses \$175.00 3500.00

Saddle horse & baggage horses 375.00

Due on trade one for pair 300.00
4075.00

On car & wagons as per contract
2100.00

Services 90.00

Apr. 19th/3rd Nat. Bank Check
310.00

May 5th/ 100.00

May 13th 100.00

June 23rd Commercial Trust
Check 100.00

July 7th 100.00

July 24th 100.00

Oct. 7th 375.00

Jan. 1st as per letter, 6 animals -
Kangaroo, Bear, 2 Antelope, deer,
Aoudad 500.00

4075.00

4 Llamas 125.00 500.00

3 Aoudads 75.00 225.00

Birds and monkeys 54.00

Yak 60.00

R.R. fare Washington and
return 9.00

\$848.0

Draft 495.00

Leopard 230.00

Birds 54.00

Yak 60.00

R. R. 9.00

848.00

This letter reveals in detail the arrangements between the two circusmen starting in the spring of 1913. In essence, Frank A. purchased horses from Mr. Hall to the tune of \$4,075. In payment, Frank A. sold him a rail car and an unknown number of wagons for \$2,100. It is suspected that the remaining monies owed were to be paid during the 1913 season in accordance with an agreed upon schedule. However, the lack of business during the early part of that season caused Frank A. to be seriously delinquent in his payments. He was still \$500 short of satisfying this obligation as 1914 approached. Around January 1st, 1914, he sent Mr. Hall 6 animals that were worth \$500 and seemed to offset this lingering debt. Frank A. then purchased some additional animals on behalf of Mr. Hall and for this initiative, our hero was still owed \$253. Then the punch line statement to the

effect that he desperately needed the money. Very sad indeed.

Meanwhile the tour continued. Huntingdon (8/8) was next up. A nice article on the front page was obviously the work of Winona Robbins and it was positive in every way. Rain interfered with business somewhat but it was still a profitable day. Some more acts from the Sautelle Circus joined here, this time augmenting the sideshow. There was also a turnover of command in the annex with Ray Dix now in charge. It seems that circus day at Huntingdon was also an excuse of many for a liberal indulgence of grog as there were more drunks on the streets than in many years, maybe ever. In fact, four men from nearby dry Mount Union had taken in the circus amongst other things and drove their car off the road during their return home. None were seriously injured and all had some difficulty recalling the incident. The circus did better than these four gentlemen when it visited Mifflin (8/10). Two good houses greeted the troupe for the best day in some while. If one were reading the *Billboard* while in Mifflin, he or she

must consider that by selling it, Frank A. was depriving himself of the revenue stream produced by these horses on the vaudeville circuit during the cold months from the show's closing in October until it opened in the spring.

The show turned south for the final time, playing Newport and then Carlisle (8/12). There only fair business greeted our hero. Both rain and alternative attractions in nearby villages affected the turnout. Those who came loved the performance and that included about 400 pupils from the local Indian school who attended in a body.

Shippensburg had good weather but poor business. The local paper could not understand why the townspeople did not show up for such a fine performance. Mercersburg (8/14) delivered an OK take and Chambersburg (8/17) did better than that for a good finish to a mediocre Pennsylvania tour.

Hagerstown (8/18) began the route below the Mason-Dixon Line with good reviews with like business. At Winchester, Virginia, the afternoon performance was cancelled for an unclear reason. The night house did not compensate for the absent performance. A big and exciting fight ensued between the two elephants in the morning at Martinsburg, West Virginia (8/20) while walking to the lot. There were blows amany exchanged between the two before handlers could separate them. However, once separated, the elephants seemed to reaffirm their friend-

ship and proceeded merrily to their destination. There was more excitement with the elephants than at the box-office but the day was still in the plus column. A short run took the show to Berkeley Springs, West Virginia. Good business was had by both the circus and the slickey boys.

The local paper considered the circus to be one of the best ever but the thieves made a most pleasant day unpleasant. The small village of Piedmont (8/22) was not bad for such



A stock poster with the Robbins title added.

would have noted that Frank A. was interested in selling his outstanding liberty horse act allegedly because it had been used for three consecutive years. The better guess is that this act represented real value in the marketplace and it was a way for Frank A. to raise much needed cash. Just how desperate he must have been to sell such a successful act, one

a tiny enclave. Heavy rain at Rowlesburg (8/25) made it impossible to give more than one performance and because of the elements, that one wasn't good at all. Although the weather improved greatly at Weston, being fourth in never contributes mightily to the coffers. Sutton was a plus all around with the circus goers knowing they had attended an excellent circus. The extraordinarily heavy rains revisited the show at Buckingham (8/28). This time the continuous downpour made it impossible to set up at all. The paper noted that all bills were "... cheerfully paid and from all appearance the circus people were on the square in every respect." The train arrived on schedule at Philippi and the circus dried out on the lot. Business was fair. The last day of August found the show at Belington. Good crowds turned out for the parade and the night performance. Not so good crowds visited the afternoon show. During the teardown, some of the sidewall was missing. It was believe by the police that some youngsters purloined the canvas to make tents or whatever young boys do with sidewall. The police made it clear that should they be able to locate the canvas in the hands of the thieves, a lesson would be given them that they would not soon forget. Whether this made Mr. Robbins feel better was not recorded.

September started with a fine day at Parsons. The take was a bit less at Elkins (9/2) wherein a big crowd showed up for the afternoon performance but the night house was disappointing; even more so because the performance was characterized as "splendid". As it has come to be expected, Winona was described as "a very charming representative." At Marlinton (9/4) the business was about the same as Elkins as were the afternotices. The press considered the Robbins Group to be the "best" circus ever to play in those parts. There was nothing stale in the entire performance. Hillary Long was considered to be amazing, especially his slide for life while balancing on his head. James and Jessie

Brown on the tight wire was called remarkable. Winona presented a menage act that was one of the best in the country. Her horse, a beautiful animal, was under perfect control. Even the clowns and other comedy acts e. g. Savoy, Varro and Sack (the dog), were very funny. The review closed with the comment to the effect that if the Robbins Circus would play this community in the future, it could be assured of a packed tent. Unfortunately, it wasn't to be. Ronceverte (9/5) closed out the West Virginia tour with a good day despite the 101 Ranch following



This drawing of Hillary Long's act was used in newspaper ads.

in about two weeks. This Wild West show played to capacity in good weather. It appears that when the weather permitted, Robbins held its own in the Mountain State. But the wild and turbulent weather prevailed at too many locations and, as a result, meaningful profits were nonexistent. Covington (9/7) was the initial stand in Virginia. Fair business resulted. Thomas Jefferson's home town of Charlottesville (9/9) provided a much needed surge with two turn-aways and many happy faces were

seen all around. At Culpepper (9/10) the highly acclaimed Aerial Yorkes left the show to begin their fall and winter vaudeville circuit activities. Apparently the Yorkes were a favorite of the circus family and their presence was going to be missed by all. Frank A. was heading north along the east side of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Some very impressive views. But scenic vistas notwithstanding, Frank A. had to be focusing on the lines at the ticket wagon and the lines were often not as long as they needed to be. Stands like Warrenton, (9/11), Marshall and Front Royal were just OK. Then the show did an about face and proceeded south in the Shenandoah Valley, playing Woodstock (9/15) and Harrisonburg (9/16) to pretty good business. Nearby Elkton and Luray (9/18) were similarly productive. The closing date was the next day at Charlestown, West Virginia. There was no crush of patrons at the ticket wagon.

All was quiet after the show staggered into its winter quarters at Trenton, New Jersey. If Frank A. had sold his outstanding liberty horse act, he had only his excellent two elephant act to play the vaudeville circuit during the winter months bringing in sufficient revenue that might permit him to open in the spring. Robbins attempted to interest William Hall in various opportunities to purchase animals. Whether Mr. Hall assigned Frank A. a role of an agent in defined circumstances is not known. If there were such assignments, they probably were not a big deal. These were the toughest of times and Frank A. was much more worn than when he faced similar strife in the past. He now had a thirty plus years history of failures and near failures, and an influx of cash from friends and colleagues was not forthcoming. This situation, after a lifetime of hard work would leave anyone feeling bewitched, totally bothered and completely bewildered. And Frank A. was no exception in this regard.

Side Lights On The Circus Business

PART TWENTY-SEVEN

By David W. Watt

Editor's note. The dates listed are the days the article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Gazette.

January 22, 1916

Something like ten or twelve years ago perhaps many of you will recollect a slim built, light haired young man who could always be found in the busiest part of Janesville with the latest Chicago, Milwaukee and Janesville papers, and the youngster yelling at the top of his voice, "All the latest news for three cents." When not on the busy four corners of the town, he could be found in the lobby of the hotels, and for some time this boy made quite a business out of selling papers. A little later he got a job in one of the hotels as bellboy which added quite a little to his income and still found time to sell his papers. But as time went on, his work in the hotel and his newspapers did not seem to fill his ambition and he was soon casting around for a business that later might prove more lucrative and eventually make a permanent business. He thought of the grocery, the dry goods and the clothing, but this did not seem to appeal to him for even though he might put in many years at that business if he wanted to start out for himself, he would have to have more capital that he would be able to save up.

It was not so long after that until the Buffalo Bill show exhibited in Janesville and this young man was one of the audience that seemed to take a great interest in the trained horses and other animals with the great show. After the afternoon show had closed, this young man made it his business to go around to the dressing rooms and make an application for a job of some kind with the show. He was fortunate in

falling into the hands of Rhoda Royal, the great trainer of high school horses and midget elephants and ponies, and the man that stands at the head of the list in his line of work and today possibly has more high school horses than all the rest put together in the business. This young man's youth and slight stature was rather against him, and it was after much persuasion that Mr. Royal finally gave him a job as caretaker of the ring stock. The young man was made of the right material and the hard work as well as many hard knocks did not seem to count against him, for he was right back at his work again as though nothing had happened.

It was not so long until Mr. Royal made up his mind that the young man was made of the right stuff and that he would eventually make good. He was always on the job looking after the best interest of Mr. Royal, and it was only a few years until this young man was given charge of a troupe of Mr. Royal's best stock and sent with another show as manager for Mr. Royal. From that time on he

Rhoda Royal and his menage horse around 1916. All illustration are from the Pfening Archives.



has been gradually forging to the front in the business until today he is considered one of the best animal trainers and exhibitors that there is in the business. Every season after the big shows close, this young man can be seen with the best acts of their kind in the country, either in the majestic circuit or others of high class shows of the kinds always representing Mr. Royal, the man who first made it possible for him to be in the business.

This young man was born and raised in Janesville and his name is Fred Collier, and after closing an engagement in Chicago on last Sunday night, he returned to Janesville on Monday. On Tuesday morning last at 8:30, he was united in marriage to Rose Dixon at St. Patrick's church by the Rev. Father Mahoney. Fred Collier and Rose Dixon had been sweethearts from their childhood days when they attended school together, and on Tuesday afternoon they left for Chicago where for a time at least they will make their future home.

Mr. Collier expects to put in some five or six weeks at the different theatres in Chicago after which they will take the road with some one of the big shows for the coming summer season. Wherever they may cast their lots in the future, they are sure to carry with them the best wishes of a host of friends in Janesville where they both spent all of the early part of their lives.

While I am telling you of the young men that made good in the business, I will tell you a story of a young man that joined out with the Adam Forepaugh show from Philadelphia in the 80's. He was the only child of a widow who was poor and worked around among the well-

to-do neighbors in the neighborhood of which she lived, which was the only means of support for herself and the son, who for convenience sake, we will call Tommy. This is not his real name, but as he is still living and in the business, I will not give it to you.

The boy at this time had spent much of his time practicing acrobatic stunts at times on theatrical stages in old barns and wherever he could practice leaping and tumbling, until he became quite an expert in the business. Although but sixteen years of age, his only ambition seemed to be an acrobat with the circus. His mother naturally knew enough that it was no place for a boy of his age and was opposed to his traveling with the show. But the young man was determined and time after time asked Mr. Forepaugh to talk to his mother and try and get her permission for him to join out with the circus.

The mother finally came up to the ticket wagon and had an interview with Mr. Forepaugh and when the old showman found that she was a woman of all work and one that could be depended upon as she had worked for some years a day or two at a time in the best families in her neighborhood, he was not long in making a contract with both the mother and the son to travel with the show that coming season. For at that time he was short of a wardrobe woman; one that would take care of the wardrobe when it was torn or soiled, to see that it was repaired and put in first-class condition.

The mother and the son traveled together that season, both making good, but as Adam Forepaugh died the following year, Tommy and his mother drifted away to other shows. What became of them later, I do not know, but it has been something like eighteen or twenty years since I have heard from either of them. But wherever they went, it is fair to say that both the mother and son made good, for the mother became an expert in looking after and caring for the wardrobe, and Tommy kept on improving in his work until he was

one of the best leapers and tumblers in the business, and as he was always sober and industrious and at all times a gentleman either in the dressing room or at the hotels, and for all we know, they may still be in the business.

These are two young men that came under my observation when in the business, and since I have been out, but of whom I am proud to call my friends.

Forty years ago last Wednesday, January 19th, one of the big features of the Burr Robbins show arrived in Janesville where the show made its winter quarters at Spring Brook. Her name was China Robbins, the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Burr Robbins who today lives on the north



side of Chicago where she was married to a prominent lawyer several years ago. It was only a few years ago that China Robbins and her husband toured the northern part of Wisconsin in an automobile and stopped over a couple of days in Janesville where they put in much of their time looking over the old points of interest at the former winter quarters of her famous father's home for so many years in his early career in the business.

Emulating "Bill" Rice and "Irish" Dore, W. R. (Bill) Markle, the boat showman who has operated a boat show on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers for years, now comes to the front with the announcement that he has finally decided to try a circus and menagerie on the water. "Bill" says he has twelve barges and a steamboat, the total length of the entire boat being 550 feet and the width 96 feet with accommodations unsurpassed. The circus tent will be 140 x 96 and will have a seating capacity of 3,000. For a free attraction a

hydroplane will be used. "Bill" says he has arranged to finance the show with plenty of A-1 backing and that he thinks the time is here when a show of this kind, framed right, will make a lot of money.

January 29, 1916

About the middle of December while in Chicago at the Showmen's League headquarters, I had a long visit with an old friend who for all the years that I was with the Adam Forepaugh show was connected with the privileges. This naturally kept the man around the front of the show and much of his time was spent near the ticket wagon.

During our visit he said to me: "Do you know, Dave, one of the most interesting characters around the show in the old days was your old partner and trustee, John Gross, who guarded the treasury wagon for so many years. To me John Gross was a good deal like your sidelights on the circus, for he lived entirely in the past. The today's meant nothing to John Gross. If it happened to be a bright sun-shiny day, and I would say to old John, 'This is certainly a beautiful day,' his answer would invariably be, 'Yes, you mind my word, it is a weather breeder.'

"John Gross never lived a minute in the todays and even the tomorrows always looked dark to him. The only comfort he had he seemed to get out of life was living the past over again. He often said to me: 'This man Forepaugh is all right enough. We have got to hand it to him as a showman, for he has made millions out of the business but every day I can see more than one place where the show could be run to better advantage, and people all around the show had paid but little or not attention to the business entrusted to them. I would just like to run this show one season myself, and you can bet that I would make many a change for the better.' But while Gross was a pessimist and a grouch of the worst kind, he was absolutely honest and always attended to his business. To be sure he had little to do, sweeping out the ticket

wagon and getting ice water a couple of times a day. Yet if anyone asked for a drink of ice water out of the tank in the ticket wagon, Gross would give them a look that would make them wish they had not asked for it. But after Adam Forepaugh died, John Gross went to the Soldiers' Home where he died many years ago. A few years after Mr. Forepaugh died, I met John Gross in Philadelphia and we had a long visit over the old days. He had many questions to ask me about you and the Mrs. Dave and said that when the show was late getting in the morning, he could always go to you and get a quarter for his breakfast.

"But there were but few people around the show that ran their departments to suit John Gross, outside of you and I. While here was a character different from any other that I ever knew, yet there were others equally interesting, only in a different way. Many of these old characters thought that much of the prosperity of the show was due to their diligence and advice which they often gave to Adam Forepaugh. As a rule he received it with good grace and would always leave them with the idea that they were right and that their ideas would be carried out to the letter. And back in the dressing room among the performers, you would occasionally run across one there whose ideas were something along the same line, but always pertaining to the ring performance."

In those days we had many European acts, high class ones, and necessarily high priced. Some of these people would lay aside quite a sum of money for their expenses for the coming week after salary day. Some of them who earned twenty-five to fifty dollars a day would always invite a few friends to a midnight lunch, for everyone in circus business ate four meals a day. We had three English riders one season with the show, consisting of the father and two sons. Their salary was \$250 a week; their midnight lunch consisted of a five cent loaf of bread and a quart of milk for the three. While other high priced performers would have the best the town afforded, these Lloyds never got away from their bread and milk, and the fourth meal at midnight never was allowed



Jess Willard, World's Champion.

to get above ten or twelve cents. So that a dollar or two saved out of their \$250 a week was their weekly allowance, and the balance was sent back to England each week. This mode of living soon gained for them the title of the "thrifty Lloyds from London."

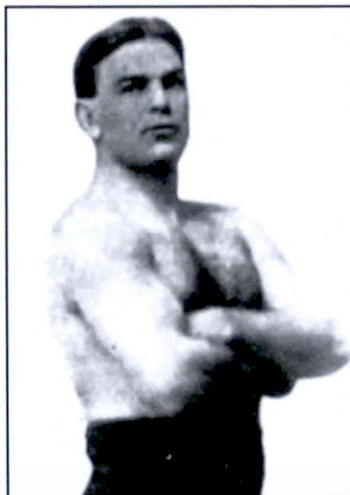
In a recent letter from Fletcher Smith, an old timer in the business, he has the following to say in regard to conditions of the country and the prospects for the shows the coming season: "If one can judge from the re-

Frank Gotch, 1878-1917, champion wrestler in 1899.

ports from every section of the country, the new year is going to be a hummer, and that means good business for the tent shows of all kinds. During my recent trip through the east, I found business booming, factories all working overtime and employment agencies going out of business. Everybody was working and there were no idle men. The south is in good condition despite rumors to the contrary and especially is this the case in the man-

ufacturing sections. The cotton mills are working night and day. It ought to be a great season for circuses and carnivals in any section of the country. Generally in the year of a presidential election, circus managers go slow, but one hears on every side reports of new shows and enlarging of the present ones and there is not a single show but that is going out bigger and better than ever. What shows will play the east is now worrying a good many managers. It is pretty certain that most of the eastern shows will not invade new territory, thinking them entitled to the gravy, but it is stated on excellent authority that one show is going to seek pastures new."

As the time draws near for the opening of the big-tented shows for the coming season, they naturally are advertising their big features--the one that is expected to draw in the shekels of the thousands. The Sells-Floto Shows announced their big drawing card as Jess Willard, the champion heavyweight, and Frank A. Gotch, the wrestler. The Sells-Floto will have a most potent, powerful and pulling attraction in 1916. Manager Tammen has with rare acumen signed Jess Willard and Frank A. Gotch. Gotch, who is in Denver



now, will do an exhibition act entitled "Physical Phenomena," said to be a most amazing stunt. Also he will give a wrestling match with three well-known wrestlers at every performance in addition to meeting all comers everywhere regardless of whom they may be, champions, near champions or youthful and undiscovered phenomena. One hundred dollars is offered to anyone who will hold out against him for fifteen minutes.

Jess Willard will give boxing exhibitions and appear in the new colossal and dazzling spectacular production, America, in which the champion takes the premier role--an idealized cowboy of the picturesque and physically perfect type. In his boxing bouts

of from three to six rounds, the champion will also meet all comers, but, of course, the circus will carry a coterie of prominent and skilled boxers to fill out the card when few or no aspirants for fame are forthcoming.

Jack Curley, the noted sporting impresario, will take charge of the publicity of this unparalleled feature and high salaried drawing card, personally advancing the interest of the noted duo. H. H. Tammen is receiving congratulations on every hand over his acquisition.

February 5, 1916

Last week at Baraboo, Wis. death came and relieved the sufferings of one of its oldest and most respected citizens. It was Mrs. G. G. Gollmar, mother of the famous Gollmar brothers who have been in circus business for many years, and are cousins of the famous Ringling boys, Mrs. Gollmar and Mrs. Ringling being sisters.

Mrs. Gollmar had lived her allotted time and was in her 87th year when she passed away. She had lived in the place where she died for sixty-seven years. "Mother Gollmar," as she was known by her neighbors and friends for years, was an ideal woman. All her life she had lived for her family and her church, and one of her greatest pleasures for several years past was to watch her sons build up one of the finest shows of the country and to know that their ambition had been realized. Mrs. Gollmar's death takes the last one of the older residents of the Ringlings and the Gollmars.

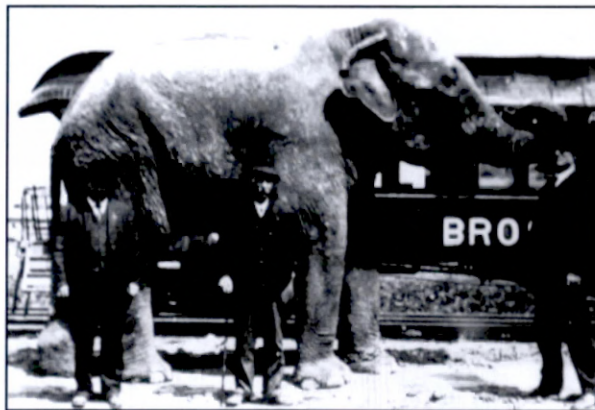
In writing of the characters of years ago in the show business, there was one different from any other in the early days that I ever knew who made his home in Janesville for a number of years in the early 70's. He was known by the name of Diabola, the fire king, and familiarly known in circus business all over the country, by the name of "Dib," the Fire King and man of many faces. He was a hard, conscientious worker. For some years with the Burr Robbins show did several turns in the side show as well as the concert feature in the big show. Dib would give at

least a dozen shows a day, and in addition to this would make all the announcements in the big show as he had a loud, clear voice which could be heard in all parts of the canvas. He was a good storyteller, and the night was never too dark, nor the roads so heavy, when I would drive by Dib and his wife, but what he would always say "Beautiful night. Elegant roads," or something of the kind.

Dib was the kind that got the most out of life. If every day was not sunshine to him, some of his friends never knew it. After putting in several years on a salary with the Burr Robbins show, he finally took an interest in the privileges and took charge of them for a season, but this did not prove a good investment. After closing the season, Dib made up his mind to quit the business and later settled in Chicago where he opened a buffet and restaurant at Sixty-First and State Streets, where he remained until after the World's Fair. In "84 or 85" he died and was taken back to his old home in Michigan and buried. There are still many old timers in Janesville that will recollect Diabola and his smiling face.

Last week the Orton Brothers Circus bought what is probably the largest elephant in this country, known by the name of "Hero." Hero stands ten feet and eight inches in height, and is certainly a much larger elephant than either Bolivar or Jumbo. Orton Brothers were obliged to build a special car to transport him over the road as one of the modern elephant cars built heretofore was not large enough for Hero. The

Orton Bros. Circus' big elephant Hero.



Orton Brothers expect Hero to be a great drawing card the coming season.

Orton Brothers are the sons of Miles Orton, who for some years wintered in Janesville and was the principal rider in Burr Robbins show. Miles Orton at that time carried the older of these boys on his head while riding and all these years since they have put in the business until a few years ago, they organized a show of their own and have been gradually building it up, until today it is a show of quite a little prominence in the smaller towns.

A couple of weeks ago at Bridgeport, Conn., at the winter quarters of the Barnum & Bailey Show, a baby giraffe was born, and while this was much out of the ordinary, and I do not know of a giraffe living today that was born in America. A letter from the winter quarters has the following to say regarding the new arrival: "The long-looked-for event came to pass at the winter quarters at ten o'clock Friday morning January 21, when the new giraffe put in its appearance after the stork had completed a hard journey during which the new arrival's shins were scraped on many a house-top and chimney en route. The addition to the long and lanky family is about five feet high including its neck and is a very healthy specimen. The Bridgeport papers gave much space to the arrival of the baby and promptly named it Phineas T., though the reason is unknown, for to tell the truth, folks, it is not that kind of a giraffe. As Lew Fields used to say, "Maybe it's Julia."

At Cedar Rapids, La., a new show is being organized which will be put on the road the coming season bearing the names of those famous in the business years ago. The name of the new show is Coop and Lent. Judging from the names of the men who will represent it the coming season, it certainly should be a success, for men well known in the business will have charge of all the different departments and it certainly would prove a success. The Coop & Lent New United Monster Shows will be a three-ring circus, museum and menagerie

and will have as executive staff W. T. Hanright as general manager, L. J. Stark, business manager; Frank Kanak, secretary and treasurer; F. C. Cooper, general agent, and Art Eldredge, superintendent. General offices are maintained in Cedar Rapids with an advance office in charge of Mr. Cooper in Chicago. The show train will be made up of twenty cars entirely owned by the show, and most of them are new for circus purposes. The sleepers were bought last week from the Pullman company. The big top is a 110 foot round top with three 50 foot middle pieces. The menagerie is an 80 foot round top with two 30 foot middle pieces. The Thompson Company of Cincinnati is now building these tents. In the menagerie will be twenty dens and four elephants together with a number of lead animals. The trained horses and ponies formerly with the Hugo Brothers Show were bought at the recent sale and will make up a part of the arena performance. All privileges will be owned and operated by the management. The advance will use two cars and a brigade. The extensive line of all new special billing is being gotten out and Mr. Cooper feels particularly gratified with the business-like and active methods of the several members of the new show management. E. F. Lampman, formerly press agent for the Two Bills and the Young Buffalo Shows, has been engaged as general press agent and will have as assistant Tom G. Davis, a Baltimore newspaper man. Robert H. Meredith will be general agent. The several other agents are not as yet engaged, but will probably be announced at a later date. The season will open at Cedar Rapids, Ia. Saturday, April 29th.

February 12, 1916

In speaking of character of different kinds that could be found in the big shows of years ago, two young men came to my mind a few days ago that could always be found around the front of the show any time after the opening of the show in the afternoon. One of these was a young man by the name of George Osborne, who was what was known as an extra front door man, and the other, Lou Williams, who was always an extra around or near the ticket wagon.

Neither of these young men weighed over one hundred and fifty pounds, were of medium height, and to look at, nothing out of the ordinary. Both worked on canvas, but during the afternoon were assigned to these two positions and could always be found there in towns where there were likely to be more or less of the rough element, like the coal mining districts or in towns where the big rolling mills employed thousands of people.

Many times the toughs would congregate around the front of the show in small squads in front of the ticket wagon or the main entrance and bother people that wished to go to the show. When they were invited to step to one side and make room for the people to enter the show, they were seldom ready to do anything but annoy both the show people and the patrons. But it never seemed to matter to Williams and Osborne whether there were four of them in a squad, or twenty-four; they always looked alike to them and they were certainly two of the fastest human fighting machines that I ever saw.

One day in particular there were a dozen or fifteen of these toughs that gathered in front of the main entrance and refused to stand to one side and allow people to enter the show. When Williams and Osborne stepped up and commenced their work, the fifteen men were soon in a heap and were not long in getting away after they were in shape and

Peter Taylor, a well-known wild animal trainer.



some had to be helped away by their friends. When Lou Williams came back near the ticket wagon, I said to him: "Lou, that was certainly a tough bunch you just got rid of."

Lou, though a fast fighter was a slow and easy talker, and he drawled out, "Yes, boss, but after the first one is down, the others come easier, because it don't hurt them so bad to fall."

When these two young men turned loose on a crowd of a dozen or twenty toughs, their work was so fast and furious that but few of them knew what had happened until it was all over. This was in 1882, and Williams and Osborne certainly had quite a little work of that kind early in the season, for we made all the big mining towns and manufacturing places in Pennsylvania and Ohio. From that time on each year was less bother of that kind with few exceptions. The big shows are run as quietly as any other business, and there are few towns where they experience any serious trouble.

Many people in Janesville will recollect the Harry G. Wilson Animal Show which was here two years ago with the Miller Brothers Carnival company who exhibited near the Jackson street bridge. The Wilson wild animal act, which consisted of lions, tigers and other animals, were handled by the famous wild animal trainer, Peter Taylor. Peter Taylor was an Italian and had been with Harry Wilson for some years. Last year Mrs. Wilson left the show and went to Reno, Nevada where she obtained a divorce from her husband, and a couple of weeks ago was united in marriage to Peter Taylor. The wedding took place at the residence of Bob Harley in Pittsburgh.

In my last letters I have had more or less to say at different times about the high school horses of Rhoda Royal and the different shows that they traveled with, and also the troupe which Fred Collier, an old Janesville boy, has been handling for several years until the owners of high school horses have come to the front and declared themselves as owners and handlers of some of the best in the business. While these men are content with half a dozen or so, Mr. Royal is continually breaking

in new horses and always has from fifty to seventy-five of them on hand to send out with the different shows.

In a letter from George R. Hobbs of some fine performing horses that he has, I will have to admit that his beautiful blood bay horse, which stands seventeen hands high, known as "Joe Bailey," for both appearance and performance, is certainly one of the highest class ones that I have ever seen. The following letter written by Mr. Hobbs himself gives the public an idea of his views in the matter of his school horses: "I have read recently different statements regarding the greatest high school horses that show people know of at this time, or have known in years past. This is one thing that I am a genuine "nut" over. I have done little in this world for the past ten years but train and exhibit this kind of a horse. Naturally, I believe I know more or less about them. I have seen about all the high school horses exhibited at circuses, Wild West shows, carnivals, etc.; also hundreds of horses owned by parties not connected with the show business in any way. And here are my views regarding some horses that I have seen. "Joe Bailey" was the best actor I ever saw, and he did his numbers in a showmanship manner that a human performer would do well to copy. His repertoire was not so extensive as other horses I know of, but what he did was the best I ever saw. "Columbus" was a great horse and one that had it on any horse in his class. I met Tom Bass in Mexico, Mo., two years ago, and he told me the history of this wonderful horse and all about his training. He said "Columbus" was the greatest of them all. Miss Mildred Mulhall (that was) had in 1910 a most beautiful horse called "Bill Oliver" which was a crackerjack. Since that time I believe this horse had his name changed several times. Miss Mildred Mulhall does not work him any more, but in 1910 she displayed some great work with him.

"I have seen high school horses, five of which are finished products, and the other two are coming through. I have been showing two of them in New York City in vaudeville since October—"Tonga Chief" and "Texas Tommy," and while I know

they are good, I won't tell you how great they are. However, I will conclude by saying that I own the greatest high school and dancing horse that ever stood on four legs in America and that I would be glad to show this mare against any horse in America for any part of \$1,000 or the whole of it, performance alone to count, two recognized showmen and two regular horsemen to be the judges. This goes for horses in or out of the show business."

Mike Rooney of the Rooney family of bare back riders.

After an illness of some time, Michael Rooney died at his home in Chicago on Monday last. Mr. Rooney was a former Baraboo boy and for several years was principal bareback rider of the Ringling shows. His remains were taken to Baraboo on Tuesday last, and the funeral was held at his old home on Thursday. Mr. Rooney was thirty-eight years of age. He was a cousin of Charles Rooney who is still boss hostler with the Ringling show. Michael Rooney was one of the best bareback riders in the business for some years, but broke down and moved to Chicago a few years ago where he opened a training stable which he was managing at the time of his death. This removes one more Baraboo man who has been prominent in this business for some years.

February 19, 1916

Another old timer gone. John Davenport, father of the famous family of bareback riders, died at his home at 5026 West Madison Street, Chicago. Possibly few men today knew Uncle John Davenport, as he was familiarly known for years, better than I. It was in the late 70's that he, with his two youngest sons, John Jr. and "Stick," traveled with the Burr Robbins show. "Stick" was then a boy of nine or ten years of age and

did a pony act, and for many years back he has been one of the famous riders of the country. Uncle John Davenport was one of the nicest men that I ever knew in the business or out of it. For many years back his principal work with the show was that of ringmaster. But he has cracked his last whip and has given his last order to the old clown and the lady bareback rider, all of whom will sincerely mourn his loss.

In the wagon show days when we left Janesville, Uncle John Davenport was signed to ride over the road in the carry-all with a dozen or fourteen people drawn by four horses. On long trips after we got out into Kansas and Nebraska, many of the drives were from twenty-five to forty miles, many times driving all night which made a long tiresome ride. I remember very well one night when we had a drive of thirty-five miles. As I had a pair of horses and a top carriage, and while I was supposed to go over the road alone, I invited Uncle John to accompany me on the long drive. This pleased the old man. He told me what a relief it was to get over the road two or three hours ahead of the regular hotel train, as it would give him that much more time to sleep. I told him whenever we had a long drive of that kind for him to let me know and that he would always be a welcome guest.

Many a time there would be from a dozen to twenty people that would have to sleep in the hayloft of the barn, and Uncle John would always say, "This is all right. It is the best we can do. Just give the boss a big house so that he can pay us on salary day and we will do the rest." My sincere wish is that Uncle John may find as many people on the other show that will be as kind and considerate to him as he has been to thousands.

The following letter from Chicago gives the particulars of his death: "John L. Davenport, father of the



famous Davenport family of bare-back riders died at his home, 5026 W. Madison Street, Chicago, on February 3, after a protracted illness. Had he lived until March 22 next, he would have been an octogenarian.

"Mr. Davenport was born in Savannah, Ga. in 1836. At an early age he worked for the elder John Robinson, founder of the Robinson Ten Big Shows. During the years of the civil war, he toured the south with this show and appeared many times before all the leading Confederate and Union generals.

Later he was identified with the Adam Forepaugh, Sells Brothers, Barnum and Bailey and other leading American circuses. He also toured England, Ireland and Australia extensively.

"The funeral services were held at the residence on the afternoon of February 5 and the remains were buried in Forest Home Cemetery, Chicago. The deceased is survived by a widow, Mrs. Ella Davenport and six children. John, Albert (Stick), May, Orrin, Mrs. Andrew Bartoli and Lulu (Mrs. Reno McCree) all of whom are well known in the circus world."

In a letter from Joseph C. Miller of Miller Brothers and Arlington 101 Wild West, he gives the following information as to the makeup of the show for the coming season. Among the big new features to be taken out this season is a military "preparedness" spectacle with which will be used an entire company of United States regular infantry, cavalry and artillery. This novelty is to have expert handling and promises to be one of the entertainment factors in the show world during a season now expected to prove unusually profitable. Of the innovations contemplated by Miller Bros. and Arlington there is to be ahead of the show a special car, running second to advance car No. 1, which will carry a supply of automobiles with which the advance men may cover country routes efficiently and with credit to the enterprise. George Arlington has consented to remain at the helm of 101 as its general manager; Joseph C. Miller will personally direct the arena, with the assistance of competent military advisers as to the handling of the big spectacular maneu-

vers and feature numbers; Edward Arlington continues as advance manager and will route the show; Willard D. Coxey is again to act as manager of advance car No. 1 and C. W. Finney will be general contractor.

February 26, 1916

I have mentioned in a former article of the reorganization of the old Forepaugh show in St. Louis on the fourteenth of September in 1882 for a long southern trip which proved to be a disastrous one, as the show lost between fifty and fifty-five thousand dollars before it closed on the nineteenth day of November at Chattanooga, Tenn. Adam Forepaugh often declared: "No more South for me. Any time when any advance agent gets me south of the Mason and Dixon line again with my show, it will only be to a few of the larger cities."

But it was only some three years later that the advance agent came back to the show and told Mr. Forepaugh that conditions in the south had changed, that cotton was selling at a good price and it had been some years since there had been as much money in the South, especially in the large towns, as there now was. After some persuasion, Mr. Forepaugh finally consented to make a few of the better towns and among these was Birmingham, Alabama. The advance agent had been there, and on account of the mountains of iron ore discovered, the entire city was on a boom such as no southern town up to that time had ever seen.

Birmingham was located in a valley something like a mile wide and several miles long. After the discovery of the rich iron mines there, thousands of people rushed to Birmingham, not only capitalists, but thousands of working people. The town immediately commenced building up in every direction, most of the buildings of which were of the cheap character; for there were thousands who could not find a place to sleep nights and any kind of a hotel

or boarding house could get their own price. Our advance agent, after looking the town over, found that it would be an expensive proposition to show there. But, as dollars went like dimes did in this part of the country, they finally contracted the town, paying exorbitant prices for everything; and to keep pace with the town, naturally had to raise the price of admission to the show to one dollar and fifty cents extra for reserved seats.

Edward Arlington, co-owner of the 101 Ranch Wild West show.

The hotel that contracted to care for our people called for three dollars per day, and they were not anxious to take us at that

price. All hotels and bars in the town ran all night. The hotel at which we stopped had twelve bartenders with four on duty at a time and eight hour shifts. Over near the foot of the big mountain where work was being pushed as fast as possible, rows of small three and four room houses were built for working people, and as fast as they were finished, were rented for twenty dollars per month.

The show arrived there on Sunday morning and showed Monday. On Sunday morning I took my first meal in Birmingham at what they said was the best restaurant there. It should have been better than it was for present day Blackstone and LaSalle Chicago hotel prices prevailed. Hay, oats and corn were more than double what they had been paying in the north, and everything else in proportion.

The receipts of the show for that day were much larger than any one day of the season, for everybody seemed to have plenty of money, and there was never a question as to the price. After I got through selling tickets, I commenced packing up the silver on the board, getting ready to pay bills, putting silver dollars and halves into twenty dollar stacks and quarters into tens, until I had the entire board covered with silver. About this time an old white-haired



darky was standing near the wagon with his hat off under this arm, which was an indication that he was an old time slave on account of his good manners.

The old man with a smile on his face said, "Boss, Ah nevah did 'spect to live to see so much money. Ah done think yo' all Yankees up North do have plenty of money, and when yo all get short, ah reckon den yo' come South."

Such characters are always interesting to me and I soon commenced asking the old man to give me some of the history of his life. I asked him if he had ever been a slave. "Yes, Boss," he said, 'fo' many years."

"Were you ever sold at auction?"

"Oh, yessah. I was sold twice."

"What did the auctioneer say, Uncle, when he asked you to step upon the block to be sold? Did he give you a good recommendation?"

"Yessah, Boss, he said, 'Dis man is not de siftes' of nigahs, but he is what you would call a dependable one. He is always reliable and will do as good a day's work when sent out alone as though he had a boss with him.' And both times that ah was sold ah went to good bosses and nevah was abused very much."

When I asked the old man how much he brought, he smiled and said, "Well, Suh, I can't tell. Dat was a long time ago."

Always in the South, even though the colored people did not have money enough to go to the show, they all took a holiday, took in the parade and spent the rest of the day looking around the outside at the side show banners, watching the men sell tickets, the crowds going to the show and listening to the music.

Our hotel bill figured up over \$600 for the two days, and the lot \$250, while in the north in a town of that size, it would cost us \$50 or \$75. All kinds of feed for the stock was more than double, but the show on a day cleared up more money than any single day in the season.

But it was only a few days later that the change came. We showed in a typical old southern town that had little or no improvements since the Civil War. In this town everything was cheap, but we were only billed to give one performance in the afternoon. The house was a big one for

they had not had a big show in years. The performance was not more than half over until a couple of men known in that country as colonels made up their minds that this was a good place to settle a feud of long standing. This created a little disturbance for a time, but the men were arrested and taken out of the show and the performance went on as though nothing had happened.



In those days this gun game seemed to be the only way for would-be colonels of that country to settle their differences. As a big show like the Adam Forepaugh show drew them from many miles around out of the mountains, if there were any differences of long standing between neighbors, circus day seemed to be the one day set apart to settle such differences. There was a marked difference between this town and Birmingham. In Birmingham they seemed to be too busy making and spending money; while in the latter town, everything seemed to stand where it did when the Civil War closed. Houses were unpainted, streets no better than the public highway miles out into the country, and even the people looked to be in a neglected condition themselves. It was said, after the close of the show by businessmen of the town, that there were just as many people outside of the show as there were inside. The owner of the lot told me when I was settling with him that the people were absolutely without money. While a few of the smaller shows made long seasons in the South, the big shows as a rule closed early, for the expense was so great that it was impossible for them to make a long season.

Billy Burke, the clown, once said that after making a long season in the South, the first night after arriving home, when he got ready to retire for the night, through habit he crawled under the bed, thinking that

he was getting into the lower birth.

On Wednesday of last week the Showmen's League of America held their third banquet and ball at the Virginia Hotel, which was attended by several hundred people. It was said to be one of the largest and most successful in the history of the league, for it was there that many old stories were told and old friendships renewed. May the Showmen's League live on and prosper.

March 4, 1916

Work at the different winter quarters of the big shows is nearing an end and it will only be a short time until everything in the way of fittings for the coming season will be in readiness. One of the greatest improvements to the outfit of the great Ringling show is the six solid steel sleepers made for the use of that show the coming season. In a letter from Baraboo of recent date, the following interesting data is given as to the refitting of that great show for the coming season.

The Minstrel and Vaudcircus (credit for latter name due Ed P. Norwood, representative of Ringling Brothers) given by the B.P.O. Elks No. 688 of Baraboo, Wis., at the new Al Ringling Theatre on Monday and Tuesday nights, Feb. 14 and 15, and in which many circus and vaudeville performers participated, was a success in every way. The house was filled to capacity on both nights.

F. J. Worrell, manager of both the theatre and Ringling Circus, extended every possible courtesy to the professionals on the program, including a sleigh ride to the show's winter quarters under the escort of John R. Agee, equestrian director, where M. Dennman had his troupe of thirty elephants do their new acts; a trip to "the farm" where Charles Rooney, boss hostler, exhibited the horses, wagons, etc., under his care; and a trip to the car shops where Pete Hirst, master of transportation, is putting the eighty-four cars, including six new steel vestibuled Pullmans, in condition for the season. Mr. Worrell also played host at the Elk Lodge rooms where a supper was served.

It was on March the sixth, 1897, that the Adam Forepaugh show for the first time opened in Madison

Square Garden, New York City. The advance sale, which opened one week in advance, amounted to something more than \$30,000. Much of this advance sale was for boxes which held six people and sold for \$12.00 or two dollars a chair. These were largely occupied by famous men and women, both financially and socially; among them was one that was particularly noticeable, and that was Mrs. Frank Leslie.

Part of this story I have told you before, but just at this time it will prove of interest; for at the death of this famous financier and writer, in her will she left her millions to the suffragette cause. Now the relatives are fighting it out in the courts and asking that the will be set aside. Mrs. Frank Leslie was not only a brilliant writer, but a financier and at that time she visited every department around the show. On our departure from New York, she asked for a route of the show.

"For," said she, "I want to come on and see a great show like this under canvas."

In ten days or two weeks later she came on and brought her cartoonist with her and gave the show an entire page in Frank Leslie's magazine. Now the millions that she left are being fought out in the courts; and like the Bailey millions of the Barnum show, there is no telling when the end will come.

I have been asked many times who I considered the greatest leader of men that I know in the show business. While this is a hard question to answer, yet there were at least three men that were positive in their work and all great leaders, and yet in a different way. Adam Forepaugh was a natural general and leader of men, being large and at times having a gruff commanding way about him; but he was always a great leader, both among the officers and performers around the show as well as the working men. Any order that Adam Forepaugh gave around the show in any department was always final and never questioned. In times of trouble of any kind, he was always in the front rank and his orders especially among his own people were always looked upon as final.

James A. Bailey, for so many

years manager of the Barnum Show, was a great leader of men, but in a different way. Mr. Bailey was quiet and unassuming, always to be found with the show; and his orders, although given in a quiet way, carried their weight. Many old men who had been with Mr. Bailey more than a quarter of a century were always ready to carry out his wishes, knowing that they came from the little general that always knew what he was talking about. All these men, no difference what the order might be, would carry out his wishes. No one ever questioned but what it was exactly the thing to do.

Another great leader of men, and one who had a tendency to draw all kinds of people around him who were in his employ, was the late Al Ringling. He, too, was different from either Adam Forepaugh or James A. Bailey in this way, that Al Ringling was always one of them. He could always be found with the show and always in a working capacity. In case of storm or trouble of any kind, it was always, "Come on boys." For he was always there and one of them. Probably no showman ever lived that was missed more from the ticket wagon to the dressing room than Al Ringling. His business all his life was in every department around the show, and any orders that Al Ringling gave were always final and carried out to the letter. So that while all these men were great leaders of men, it was in different ways. But in any line of work or business, these men would have proved themselves great generals.

A very large consignment of Siberian camels was released from quarantine at Baltimore last week to be shipped over the country to zoological gardens, circuses and motion

The Coop & Lent Circus big top going up in 1916.



picture people. The camels were imported by Carl Hagenbeck from his Hamburg garden and successfully passed the rigid inspection made by government officials. Ten go to the Barnum & Bailey show; ten to Los Angeles, two to Denver, three to Montgomery, Ala., and two each to the Philadelphia, New York and Boston Zoos. The Shriners of Columbia, S.C. get two for their convention to be held in that city in May.

All these camels have been handled by S. A. Stephen, general manager of the Cincinnati Zoological Garden and American agent for the Hagenbeck's. In addition to that, he has shipped to the Memphis Zoo two excellent hippopotamus and a number of antelopes. Only one death has been reported in the several consignments coming over this spring from Hagenbeck's Park, in spite of the cold, rough trip across the Atlantic. The chill of the weather proved too severe for a twenty-eight foot python from India, one of the forest serpents Mr. Hagenbeck has had in years which weighed about 230 pounds. It died and was buried at sea. It was coming to this country for Howe's Great London show.

Mr. Stephen reports the shipment to the Hagenbeck Garden from Africa of a large consignment of zebras and from India a large consignment of elephants. Many orders have already been received at the Cincinnati Zoological Garden for these animals; and as soon as they arrive in Hamburg, they will be transferred to American vessels and shipped immediately to this country. The demand for camels has been unusually brisk according to Mr. Stephen because of the fact that for more than two years no ruminant animals have been imported from Europe. Even with the permission of the government to import camels, some orders have remained unfilled because of the scarcity of the camels in the Asiatic market.

March 11, 1916

A few days ago I received a letter from an old friend by the name of F. C. Cooper who is now located in Chicago. Cooper and I traveled together with the Forepaugh Show in 1885 and 1886, but I had not seen

him nor heard from him in many years. He is now general contractor and route agent of the Coup & Lent Shows, and Mr. Cooper said that Janesville was on the route and that they would show here early in the season and unless the route was changed, they would exhibit in this city on May 6.

While the Coup & Lent Show is not among the largest, it is a three ring show of high quality, carrying a fair sized menagerie, and the ring performance is as good as the best for size. They have a school of Rhoda Royal's performing horses and midget elephants and many other high class acts which go to make up a first class performance. As Uncle John Stowe used to say in making his announcements with the Burr Robbins Show, "If we give 'em a good crowd, they'll give us a good show."

Already most of the large shows have fixed their opening dates. The Barnum Show will open on April 1 at Madison Square Garden, New York, and the Ringling Show will open at the Coliseum in Chicago on April 15.

With a cold north wind and flakes of snow in the air, the body of the late Al Ringling was removed from the vault in the cemetery to the new mausoleum. The metal casket was covered with a beautiful floral blanket from Mrs. Ringling and there was a short service by Rev. H. Mueller, both at the cemetery vault and the mausoleum. The bearers were J. Van Orden, E. G. Marriott, T. W. English, Dr. G. T. Thuerer, J. S. Briscoe, F. J. Warrell, John Agee and Joseph Miller. Mrs. Ringling, her brother William Morris and many other friends were present.

The mausoleum stands on a ridge of land on the west side of the cemetery with the door to the east. The base of the structure from east to west is about fifteen feet and from north to south about twelve and a half feet. The base is slightly larger than the top and the covering is a single stone weighing about twelve tons. The stone is thicker in the center so that the rainfall will flow away.

Across the front over the door are the words "Al C. Ringling." The first three letters are larger than the last word. The two doors are of bronze, there being leaded glass at the top. There is a Masonic emblem on each

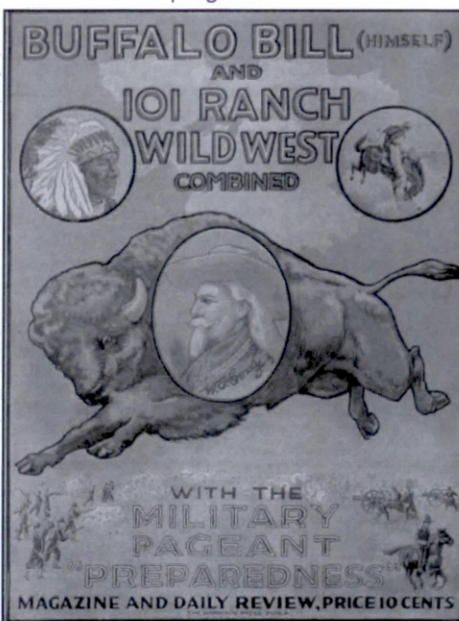
door, the one on the left being the nature of a monogram and the one at the right containing the Latin inscription, "Spes mea in Deo est," which means "my hope is in God." There is a step leading to the doors and on each side a granite urn. The whole is built of Vermont gray granite and cost about \$10,000. S. A. Collins of Reedsburg was the builder. There are three crypts extending from east to west, one above the other, and Mr. Ringling's body was placed in the lower one. He died on January 1, 1916, and the ceremony was just two months after his death.

The mystery surrounding the plans for the coming season of Col. William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) was dissolved today by Edward Arlington of Miller Bros. & Arlington's 101 Ranch Show. The new organization is to be known as the Buffalo Bill and 101 Ranch Wild West Show Combined.

The feature of the show will be a genuine "preparedness" spectacle, "Pioneers in War and Peace," Buffalo Bill personally appearing in the spectacle in which also, by virtue of a special authorization from the War Department, a squad of cavalry and artillery from eight different army posts will be seen, the men being on a special six months' furlough to join the show for that period.

A number of Col. Cody's former

The cover of the Buffalo Bill-101 Ranch 1916 program.



associates will again be connected with him, including Major Burke and Johnny Baker, the latter having in charge the staging of the big military spectacle. The show will open at Ponca City, Okla., May 26, under the big show title, "Preparedness."

No small measure of credit is due H. H. Tammen of the Sells-Floto Show for generously turning over to Mr. Arlington the use of the Buffalo Bill title as well as his option or contract with Col. Cody for his personal services, thus making possible the consolidation of the two organizations.

It is interesting to note that the two big shows, Sells-Floto and 101 Ranch, through a series of deals, not one of which had any connection with the other, have virtually changed features, the Sells-Floto having secured Jess Willard who toured with the 101 last season, while the 101 will have Col. Cody, last season with Sells-Floto.

March 18, 1916

It was early in the spring of '78 or '79 that a young man scarcely out of his teens and of slight stature applied at the winter quarters of the Burr Robbins Show for a position as driver the coming season. "Delavan," the boss hostler, to whom the young man applied, did not think well of his general appearance and said to him: "Young man, I am afraid you could not stand the hardships of a wagon show." But the young man insisted that he had worked around horses all his life, knew well how to care for them and many times had driven a four horse team. At that particular time, help of all kinds was scarce and the boss hostler finally hired the young man and put him to work.

This was some two weeks before the show took the road and in teaming around the winter quarters this young man soon showed himself to be all that he claimed. He was a high-class caretaker and the four horses which he had charge of soon commenced to show the attention that they were getting at the hands of the newcomer. This young man was none other than Frank Palmer who lost his life last week in the city gravel pit.

Frank stayed with Burr Robbins some four or five years and later

went to the Ringling show where he put in several years and was always the same painstaking man that he was when he first commenced in the business.

He was always quiet and unassuming and where Frank had four or an eight horse team in charge when the parade was pulled out on the lot ready for the street, no boss hostler that Frank Palmer ever worked for worried about his turnout, for they knew that it would be right in every particular.

After leaving the Ringlings, Frank went to the Gollmar Bros. Show where he stayed several years and two years ago was assistant boss hostler with that show. Early in May I spent a day at Fort Atkinson with the Gollmar Show, and much of my time was spent visiting Frank and rehearsing over old days with the Burr Robbins Show when they went by wagon.

Frank Palmer left a widow and one son. Wednesday evening of this week I had a visit with them at their home on Center Street, and they had just received a letter from Gollmar Brothers at Baraboo asking Frank to come on the coming season and take his old position. The Gollmars had not heard of his death and were anxious to have him join for the coming season.

At the time I visited him two years ago at Fort Atkinson Frank held the lines over the eight horses on the band wagon, and when they pulled out onto the street to lead the parade, it was as fine a turnout for the size of it as I ever saw ahead of a parade. The horses were snow white, all the brass on the harnesses was polished and everything about the band wagon and the horses and harness of which Frank Palmer had charge looked like new.

Mr. Gollmar told me it never made any difference to Frank Palmer when he got his breakfast or dinner, for it was always his horses first. Many a time he would hear the last call for breakfast when the show would be late into town, but this cut no figure with Frank if his horses had not been looked after.

He worked many years under Spencer Alexander, better known as "Delavan," both with the Burr Robbins and later with the Ringling

show, and although I never traveled with Frank after he left the Burr Robbins show, I always kept in close touch with him, always knew what show he was with during the season, and in the wintertime more than once I spent hours visiting with him and rehearsing old incidents that happened years before, and I knew of no one in his line of work in the business that left a better name than did Frank Palmer.

That he should meet death in the way he did here at his home after going through so many hardships and taking so many chances in the days of the wagon show, many times fording streams where bridges had been washed away and on all night, dark drives, is sad, but it seems that it had to be so. His many friends with the different shows that he had traveled with will have only the kindest of words for Frank Palmer.

Some five or six years ago while visiting with him, he asked me if I remembered the young man that I picked up by the roadside out in Kansas when we were with the Burr Robbins Show.

"You know," said Frank, "he was so sick that he could not stand it to ride on one of the big rough wagons and lay clown by the roadside until you came along and you took him in your carriage and brought him into town and got him a room at the hotel."

I had forgotten all this until Frank brought it to my mind, but all that was the matter with this young man was that he was homesick. He had joined out some two weeks before with the show and was working on canvas, but he had evidently thought that he would have a great deal of time to listen to the band play and watch the show. But when he had to work daytimes and travel nights, he soon got homesick and did not have money enough to get home, so he played off sick. I got him a room at the hotel, drew what money he had coming and collected twelve or fifteen dollars from the people around the show and left it with him to come on as soon as he got better. But in two or three days I got a letter from the landlord saying that my sick man

had slipped out of the hotel and took the first train going toward his home. The landlord ventured to say that he thought this would be his last engagement with the circus. He had been there long enough to learn that it was an easy place to raise money for one that was sick or down and out, and he took this means of getting away from the show with money to get home. This is the only incident of its kind that ever came under my notice while I was in the business.

Some two or three years after I was out and away from the business I happened in Chicago and as usual went up to Kohl and Middleton's Museum on Clark Street for I could always find someone there to visit with. There I met an old friend that had been with the Forepaugh Show for some years and had charge of one of the stands there where they sold candy and popcorn.

I said to him: "Charlie, this don't look to me like very much of a business." "Well," he said, "I got tired of the circus and had to do something and this seemed to be the only thing in sight."

"Why don't you get a position traveling on the road selling goods?" I asked. "You have a good appearance, you are a very good storyteller and all around good mixer, and I think you could surly make good with any kind of a line of goods that you knew something about."

"Why, Dave," he said, "I am the last man that could go on the road and sell goods. There are men on the road selling goods that could sell mud for breakfast food where I could not sell fish on Friday in a Catholic community. No use talking to me about a position of that kind. I expect that the best thing for me to do is to stay here until the show starts again and go back into the old business."

But this he did not get a chance to do, for it was only a few weeks later that he was taken sick with pneumonia and died, and was buried by friends in Chicago. The Showmen's League of America will see that Charlie's grave is strewn with flowers on every Decoration Day.

Many people in Janesville and the surrounding country will remember



well the clown that took the part of the baseball catcher both with the Ringling and Barnum shows. His legal name was Frank Oakley, but he was known for some years in the business as "Slivers." The following letter gives the particulars of Slivers' sad ending and also tells of the adoption of his only child, a girl of some seven or eight years of age by Josie De Mott Robinson, the famous bareback rider and one of the De Mott family who for three or four years in the 70's were with the Burr Robbins Show. I think the last of Josie De Mott's bareback riding was the last season of the Barnum Show in Janesville under the management of James A. Bailey, where Josie De Mott was the principal rider. She is one of the forest women that I ever knew and Slivers' only child is certainly fortunate in fording a home with Josie De Mott Robinson. The letter follows: "Frank Oakley, the Joey, known the country over as 'Slivers' is gone. He was found dead from gas asphyxiation, early on the morning of the 8th in his room at a theatrical boarding house of West Seventy-first Street by the police who had smashed away a barricade of tables and chairs he had placed against the door the evening before when he decided to end his life. As soon as the news became known there were many conjectures as to the cause of Oakley's committing the act. Some said he had feared his popularity was waning, others that he had become impoverished, others that he had become dissipated and still others said it was because a young woman who was sentenced to the Bedford Reformatory in 1914 on his complaint refused to marry him. 'Slivers' was one of the highest salaried clowns in the show business. His specialty was to imitate a baseball catcher, using a bird cage for a mask and a washboard for a chest protector. He was about forty-five years old.

"Frank Slivers (Oakley) was born in Sweden. His parents were concert singers who came to this country when he was very young. He found his way into the circus ring when sixteen years of age. Later he was urged by his family to give up circus life and go to the University of Michigan. He finally consented, but two years

later again found him under the big top.

"Starting out with the Andrew McDonald Circus, Oakley gradually kept rising until he became star clown with Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros. circuses. He also appeared in vaudeville and at the New York Garden and Hippodrome at various times. In 1902 he married Nellie Dunbar, a vaudeville singer, who died in 1913 leaving a daughter, Ruth, who is now being cared for at the home of Mrs. Josephine De Mott Robinson, formerly a famous circus bareback rider under the name of Josie De Mott at Hempstead, Long Island.

"The funeral was held on the 10th of this month from the Stephen Merritt undertaking establishment. Interment at Mount Olivet Cemetery, Brooklyn."

March 25, 1916

A few days ago some unknown friend sent me a copy of the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* which, by the way, is one of the big newspapers of the country. In the *Public Ledger* is a very interesting article furnished and reported by George Hartzell, one of the greatest, if not the greatest, clown in the circus business today.

This paper did not make an impression on me that the same *Public Ledger* did thirty years ago next month. While showing in Philadelphia, the *Public Ledger* took

George Hartzell, a clown with Ringling Bros. Circus.



occasion to write up the Adam Forepaugh show at that time mentioning many European features which were new, Philadelphia being the first place in the United States for several of these new European acts. In those days Adam Forepaugh brought many new acts from Europe and as Philadelphia was his home and winter quarters, it was there that the public would take their first look at the new features. At that time the article said that not all of the acts of the show were to be seen on the inside, nor did they all come from Europe, but that a free exhibition was given by one who was known as the "lightning ticket seller" every afternoon and evening. Thousands of people gathered every afternoon and evening to watch the fast work of the ticket seller until the large crowd had disappeared.

N. B. By Editor. This refers to Mr. Watt himself: "Where are the circus kings of yesterday? The sawdust rail that leads from out of the big top and on into the spangled skies and hushed silence of the dim distance, has seen them pass, one by one, until today only a few of the circus pioneers-members of the old school that raised the circus from a country sideshow to a glittering vehicle of enjoyment for millions-remain to tell about the "good old days?"

But what of the other famous showmen? No more does one hear of P. T. Barnum and "Jim" Bailey, the Forepaughs, Walter L. Main, the Robinsons and other combinations that were household phrases only a few years ago.

"Adam Forepaugh, Jr. is a lone survivor of the old line of circus magnates. Son of the famous Adam Forepaugh, himself a great horse and elephant trainer in his time, Adam, Jr. now lives in retirement in Philadelphia, wealthy with millions accumulated while he and his father were in the show business together, and after the death of his father, until he sold out to the Ringlings.

"Virtually all the old-time circuses have been merged into the Ringlings vast aggregation of today. Time has weeded out the old standbys. Each year brings the circus back 'bigger and better than ever before,' but ever changing in its personnel from the clowns and riders, 'kinkers' and ros-

inbacks, who disported before those boys and girls who are the sedate mothers and fathers of today, to the circus proprietors themselves.

"Two months more and the steam calliope and the plodding elephant and red and gold circus wagons with their blaring brass bands and wild animals, will beckon the way along the trail to the big top again. Despite the war, the circus men are priming up for one of the most prosperous and successful seasons they have ever enjoyed. Time and tide wait for no man and the circus keeps right on with the procession. The old saying, 'Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone,' holds for the circus probably more than any other human agency. More than likely Elizabeth Akers Allen was inspired by a circus when she wrote: 'Backward, turn backward, O time in your flight, Make me a child again, just for tonight!'

"Al Ringling will not be with the circus when it swings out on the open lot this spring. In Philadelphia, Adam Forepaugh, who walks squares these days to avoid the publicity which was heaped upon him in the old days will slip quietly into a 'back seat' and live the past all over again. Thousands of happy children will come to enjoy the antics of the animals and the clowns--but behind the grease paint of many a clown will be a twitching of the cords when someone asks for Al Ringling or talks about the good old days.

"No one is more qualified to talk about the circus-old and new--than George Hartzell, known as the 'millionaire clown,' son of a Philadelphia clergyman, owner of a college diploma, now director of clowns of the big Ringling shows, active in the fellowship of the Masonic fraternity of the Elks and other fraternal organizations.

You remember Hartzell. If you are a circus fan you have seen him many times. "The millionaire clown" is now starting his thirty-sixth year in the circus business and his nineteenth year as director of clowns with the Ringling Brothers. Hartzell is at his best as 'William Jennings Bryan.' In his make-up Hartzell is a 'split image' of the 'Boy Orator of the Platte,' erstwhile secretary of state and exponent of peace, grape juice

and Chautauqua lectures. Once upon a time the Quaker City Motor Club had Hartzell on for a Bryan stunt. They rented a hotel suite and invited some guests in to meet W. J. Bryan. The guests came, they saw and were conquered. Hartzell has appeared at Shriners' smokers all over the United States as "Bill Bryan," and fooled more than one person.

"You may recall Hartzell's burlesques of 'T. R.' returning from the jungles of Africa, of 'Doc' Cook finding the North Pole and many other feature cards. Hartzell is not only a clown of long standing, but a "producing clown" in the strictest sense of the word. It is his work to dope out the stunts for most of the clowns of Ringlingville. Just now Hartzell at his Philadelphia home is putting the finishing touches on the burlesques for 1916 which will be staged when the Ringlings make their debut on April 1. Hartzell takes his stuff right out of the current news of the day and develops his features from big men and big events in the public eye.

As many of you know, Cole Younger, the last of the famous band of James brothers and Youngers, died a few days ago. It was in 1889 that the Forepaugh show was billed to show in Stillwater, Minn., where the state prison is located. About ninety-three in the morning the warden of the prison having a bill to collect of the show, drove up to the ticket wagon and after I had paid him his money, he asked me if I had ever been through the Minnesota prison. When I told him that this was my first visit to Stillwater, he said, "If you have the time, I would be glad to drive you down and show you the prison and bring you back."

This I was glad to do, and on our arrival at the prison he was obliged to look after a business matter, and he took me up into the library of which Cole Younger had charge. Cole Younger at that time was librarian of the prison and in the same room another man, who had formerly been



a newspaperman, was editing a small paper once a week for the inmates of the prison.

Cole Younger, the outlaw of the West.

After the warden had introduced me to these men he left, saying that he would be back as soon as possible, and we would take a trip around the

prison, but it was nearly one hour before he returned. During all this time Cole Younger and his associate, the editor, kept me busy answering questions and telling them all about what was going on in the outside world which they had been shut off from for so many years.

While I was glad to give them all the information possible, they would have been glad to have listened for another hour and still be anxious for more. I did not appreciate then the chance I was having in different ways all over the country to study human nature of which these men cut such a figure. They were both fine looking men, both had been educated and were interesting to talk to.

When the warden called to take me back to the show grounds, the two men bade me goodbye and I told them that I surely enjoyed every minute of my visit and gave each of them a complimentary ticket for the show and said that I would be glad to have them visit the show in the evening. At this moment Cole Younger cleared up his throat and thanked me, but said he had a bad cold for the last week or ten days and that he had not been going out evenings but very little.

Cole Younger was the eldest of the three brothers and at the time of his death was seventy-two years old. He never was married and like many others when the time came to be counted down and out, he returned to the old home at Lees Summit, Mo. where years ago he bought a comfortable cottage and gave it to a niece of his, and it was there that he died and was buried only a few days ago.

Pawnee Bill's Wild West

Japanese Cavalry
and the great far east



Russian Cossacks